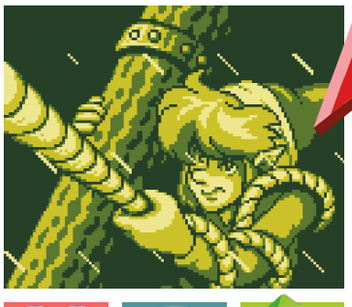
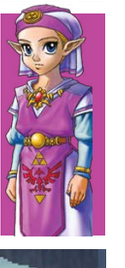
OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

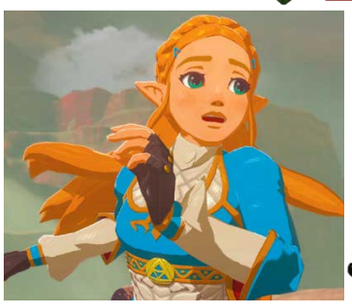
retro GAMER

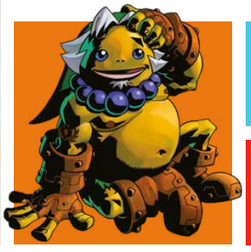
40 YEARS OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

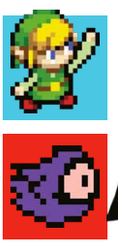


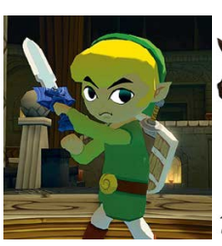


HOW NINTENDO HAS KEPT LINK AT THE PEAK OF ADVENTURING GREATNESS FOR FOUR DECADES









INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS
YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO INDY'S GREATEST QUEST

THE MAKING OF SPIDER-MAN 2
HOW TREYARCH REINVENTED SPIDEY'S WEB-SWINGING

FUTURE
LOAD 284

THE MAKING OF MATCH DAY II
INSIDE JON RITMAN'S EXCELLENT SEQUEL

ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO SUPERIOR SOFTWARE
THE BEST BBC MICRO HITS FROM THE 8-BIT PUBLISHER

BANG AVERAGE FOOTBALL

THE FAST-PACED, EASY-TO-LEARN ARCADE FOOTBALL GAME FOR 1-4 PLAYERS

PLAY WITH € AGAINST FRIENDS IN LOCAL MULTIPLAYER

GO FOR GLORY IN THE SINGLE-PLAYER, RPG STORY MODE

DESIGN YOUR OWN PLAYER DATABASES, AND TEAMS

AVAILABLE NOW!

STEAM EPIC GAMES STORE

RUAIRI DX

SECRET MODE

LOADING...

My first experience with the adventures of Link was with *A Link To The Past* on the SNES and I've been hooked by his quests ever since. Some of my favourite moments in gaming are connected to Nintendo's long-running series, from raising aloft the Master Sword in a woodland glade in *A Link To The Past*, to stepping onto Hyrule Field for the first time in *Ocarina Of Time*. It's a series that promises great adventure whenever you leave its first area and so far Link's travels have rarely disappointed me with that promise.

For the 40th anniversary of the series Martyn Carroll has trawled through mountains of old translated Japanese interviews with the original development teams to uncover nuggets of *Zelda* lore that you've hopefully never heard before. He's also interviewed a number of modern indie developers who have been inspired by Link's many quests.

Elsewhere we examine the BBC Micro games of Superior Software and discover how *Match Day II*, *Command & Conquer: Renegade* and *Spider-Man 2* were made. We revisit *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* and *Project Zero II: Crimson Butterfly*, quiz Gabriel Nieto Jimenez about working on Spanish videogame magazines and review *Resident Evil: Requiem* and *Minishoot' Adventures*.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE MOMENT FROM THE LEGEND OF ZELDA SERIES?

DARRAN JONES

Stepping onto Hyrule Field for the first time in *Ocarina Of Time*. It promised so much and fully delivered on that promise.
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning mag, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *GigaSword*
Favourite game of all time: *Strider*

TIM EMPEY

The ending of *The Wind Waker*. It was cutesy all the way through (aside from the kid with the snotty nose), then Link goes for the head!
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go.
Currently playing: *Final Fantasy VII Remake Intergrade*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*

ANDY SALTER

I've never played a *Zelda* game, lived in a mostly Sega household so we played the *Shining* series, *Vay* and *Luna* growing up.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding: *RTR: Imperium Surrectum*
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now

RORY MILNE

I remember the second quest after finishing the original *Zelda* being so cool as I was expecting a harder replay of the core adventure. Miyamoto really went the extra mile there.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: Star Wars: *Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*

MARTYN CARROLL

When the *Breath Of The Wild* DLC introduced Hero's Path Mode, so you could trace where you'd been, and crucially, where you hadn't. Suddenly, there were all these new areas to explore and secrets to find.
Expertise: Spectrum stuff
Currently playing: *The Legend Of Zelda: Tears Of The Kingdom*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*

ANDREW FISHER

Making it through Skull Woods in *A Link to the Past* for the first time.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: *Astro Burn*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*

PAUL ROSE

I'll be honest… probably the first time I met Tingle in *Majora's Mask*. Beautifully bizarre little freak.
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Doom: The Dark Ages*
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*

DAVID CROOKES

Seeing that iconic line, "It's dangerous to go alone! Take this," for the first time and not quite knowing what to expect.
Expertise: Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, *Dizzy* and PlayStation 2 (but is it retro? Debate!)
Currently playing: *Chase HQ*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*

PRAGMATA
DELUXE EDITION

STELLAR

Out of this world adventures,
anywhere you go

16
www.pegi.info

©CAPCOM

GRID LEGENDS
DELUXE EDITION

SPEED

Edge-of-your-seat racing
on Nintendo Switch 2

3
www.pegi.info

© 2025 Electronic Arts Inc. GRID and Codemasters are trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. Originally developed by Codemasters and published by Electronic Arts Inc. Developed for and published on Nintendo Switch 2 by Feral Interactive Ltd. Feral and the Feral logo are trademarks of Feral Interactive Ltd. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

INDIANA JONES and the GREAT CIRCLE

ADVENTURE

Your next discovery,
ready wherever you are

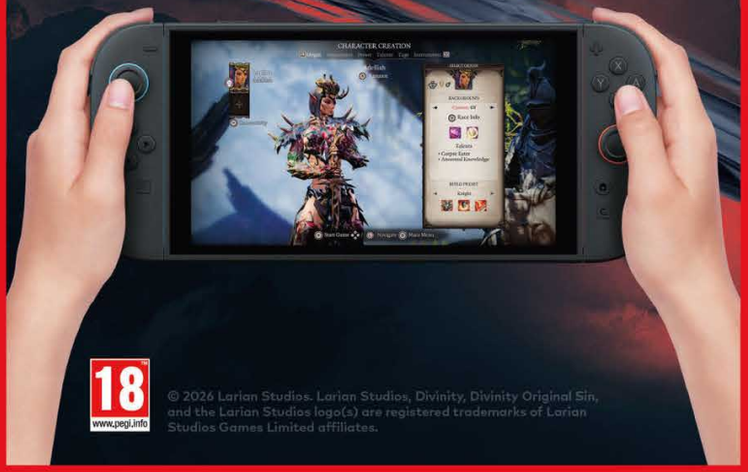
16
www.pegi.info

© & ™ 2026 Lucasfilm Ltd. Developed by MachineGames Sweden AB and published by ZeniMax Media Inc. Game codes ©2026 ZeniMax Media Inc. ZeniMax, MachineGames and their respective logos are trademarks of ZeniMax Media Inc. All rights reserved.

DIVINITY II
ORIGINAL SIN
DEFINITIVE EDITION

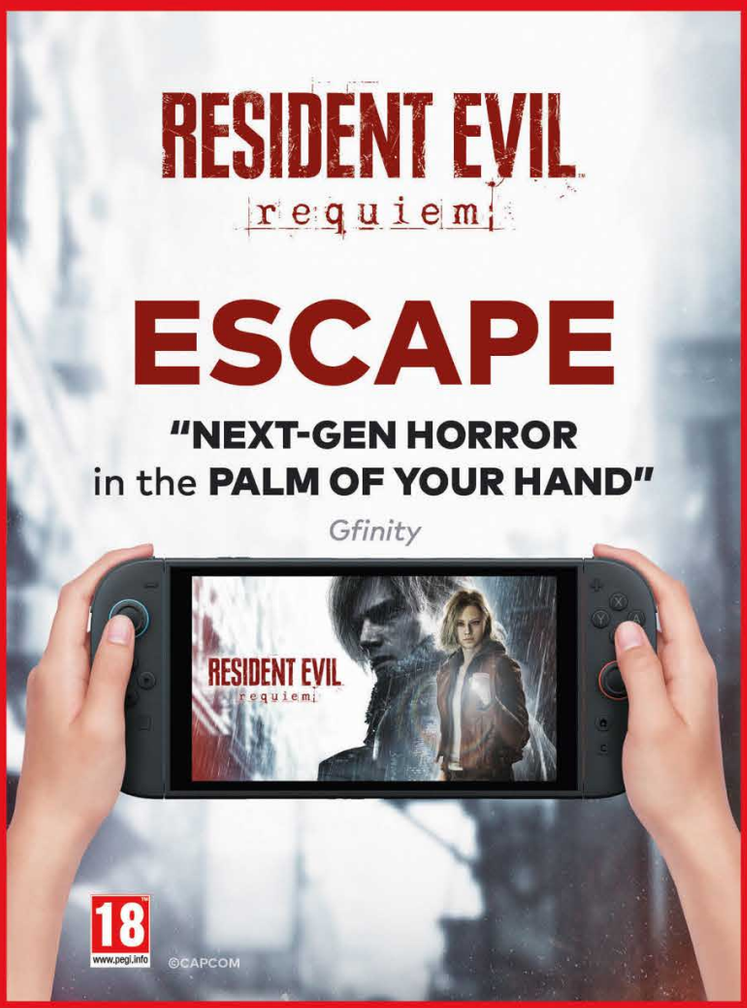
AWAKEN

Start an award-winning adventure,
upgraded on Nintendo Switch 2



18
www.pegi.info

© 2026 Larian Studios. Larian Studios, Divinity, Divinity Original Sin, and the Larian Studios logo(s) are registered trademarks of Larian Studios Games Limited affiliates.



NINTENDO SWITCH™

© Nintendo

THE **POWER** TO PLAY
ANYWHERE

Nintendo eShop

CONTENTS

>> Load 284 Breathing new life into classic games

RETRO RADAR

8 **Main News**
Darran goes hands-on with some of the incoming titles from Clear River Games

10 **Mike Mika**
Our resident US columnist on coding *NFL Blitz* for the humble Game Boy

11 **News Wall**
We say goodbye to Japanese legends

12 **Iain Lee**
It's a trip to CEX for Iain this issue. It wasn't a very enjoyable one...

14 **Mr Biffo**
Paul loves the *Zelda* games and breaks down what makes them so special

16 **A Moment With**
Darren Melbourne and Chris Smith on their new edition of The Spectrum

18 **Back To The Noughties**
It's November and Martyn is coming to the end of an epic ten-year journey

REVIVALS

20 **3D Starfighter**
You'd often use your imagination when playing Amstrad games, but sometimes imagination just wasn't enough

42 **Warbirds**
Darran learned early on that a life of crime certainly doesn't pay. Even if it involves multiplayer Lynx sessions

58 **Gain Ground**
Tim didn't enjoy living through The Troubles, but Sega's game proved a welcome distraction for him

72 **Dr Mario 64**
If the recent release of the Analogue^{3D} has had you browsing eBay, you'll be able to connect with this story

88 **Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hands**
Darran recalls his drunken rampage in London and the heavy toll he paid for an evening of excess

112 **Bayonetta**
Tim used to be crazy good at PlatinumGames' epic scrapper. Does he still have the magic?

FEATURED

34 **Music Memories: Ghouls 'N Ghosts**
Tim Follin on reworking the excellent arcade tunes of Tamayo Kawamoto

50 **Retro Gamer's Favourite... Lemmings Abilities**
Celebrate the 35th anniversary of those lovable rodents and their many skills

52 **Magazine Craft: Gabriel Nieto Jimenez**
This month we travel to Spain and discover Gabriel's impact on Nintendo

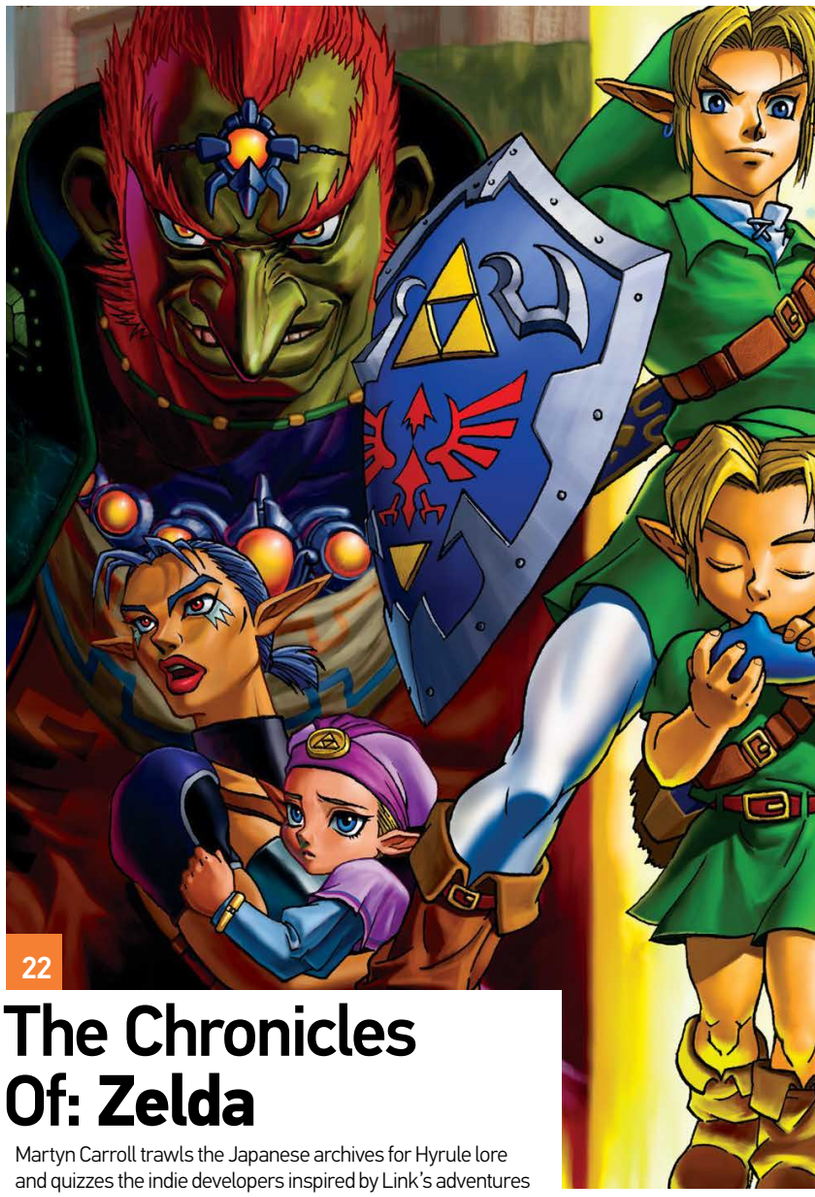
60 **Ultimate Guide: Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis**
Find out why this epic LucasArts romp is still worth playing today

64 **Covermount Corner: Amiga Action #45**
James Konik plays a pair of iconic Amiga coverdisks and reports his findings

66 **The Making Of: Command & Conquer: Renegade**
Behind the scenes of the flawed, but ambitious first-person shooter

80 **Retro Inspired: Screamer**
Learn how Milestone is updating its Nineties classic for a new generation

82 **Ultimate Guide: Project Zero II: Crimson Butterfly**
We revisit the iconic horror game and quiz the team about their recent remake



The Chronicles Of: Zelda
Martyn Carroll trawls the Japanese archives for Hyrule lore and quizzes the indie developers inspired by Link's adventures

The Making Of: Spider-Man 2
Discover how Treyarch reinvented the iconic superhero sequel for the PS2 era

Don't forget to follow us online for all your latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK | @RetroGamer_Mag | retrogamermag.bsky.social

Retro Gamer Magazine | @RetroGamerMag | retrogamer@futurenet.com

SAVE UP TO 40% SUBSCRIPTION
SEE PAGE 32

The Retro Gamer Guide To: Superior Software

Rory Milne is your guide to some of the best games to grace the BBC Micro

Gaming Grails: Ristar

REVIEWS

90 Resident Evil: Requiem
92 Minishoot' Adventures
94 Rushing Beat X: Return Of Brawl Brothers
94 Area Wars
94 Pokémon Pokopia
94 Evercade: Taito Arcade 3

ESSENTIALS

96 **Homebrew**
Andrew Fisher presents some more great releases from the scene for you

100 **Hot Topic: Thrills And Chills**
There have been some good survival horror releases this month, so Tim and Darran decided to discuss the genre

102 **Collector's Corner**
Faith Johnson loves tracking down interesting collectors and has another great choice for you

106 **My Retro Life**
Darran explains how the release of the Analogue^{3D} has made him return to the Nintendo 64

108 **Mailbag**
Send in your letters. The best one each month wins a cracking retro book

111 **Next Month**
What are the team planning for issue 285?

114 **Endgame**
Find out what happens when you complete *Heart Of An Alien*

The Making Of: Match Day II

Jon Ritman chats about his popular sequel and how it improved on his first footy classic

» PC] We're still not fully sold on the visuals, but there's no denying that *Truxton Extreme* is very good from a mechanical point of view.

CONTENTS

8 THE CLEAR CHOICE FOR RETRO
We play some of the releases coming soon from Clear River Games

10 MIKE MIKA
In a two-part column, Mike explains how he made *NFL Blitz* for Nintendo's Game Boy

11 NEWS WALL
The passing of Japanese legends and the closure of Bluepoint Games are our latest stories

12 IAIN LEE
Have you ever done the CEX walk of shame? You haven't? Don't worry, Iain will tell you all about it

14 MR BIFFO
Paul takes a trip back to the world of Hyrule and explains what makes the kingdom so special

16 A MOMENT WITH
Darren Melbourne and Chris Smith on releasing a white edition of The Spectrum

18 BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES
Martyn Carroll is close to finish an epic journey. What will he discover this month?

THE CLEAR CHOICE FOR RETRO

We play some of the games coming soon from Clear River Games

Words by Darran Jones

Due to the nature of the magazine, it's rare for us to get our hands on early preview builds of games, so when the opportunity comes up we're not going to turn it down.

Clear River Games is a relatively new name in terms of retro gaming but its games will be familiar if you've ever preordered titles from Limited Run Games, as Embracer Group owns both companies and Clear River Games is effectively the European counterpart to Limited Run Games, which publishes releases in the States.

It's already released physical iterations of a number of retro-based or retro-themed bangers, from *R-Type Delta: HD Boosted* and *Operation Night Strikers*, to the *Toaplan Arcade Collection* and *Clock Tower: Rewind* and plenty more games are on the way.

The title we're most interested in currently is a game that initially didn't impress us at all. When *Truxton Extreme* was first announced we instantly dismissed it as a cheap-looking iOS game – boy, were we wrong. From the moment we started playing Tatsujin's game it's obvious a lot of thought and love has been poured into it. While we're still not super convinced by its visuals, there's no denying it does a great job of matching the distinctive look of the original arcade classic. It sounds astonishing too, with lovely remixes of past tunes, which makes sense as the original composer is on board.

What surprised us most with *Truxton Extreme* is the sheer amount of content it offers. There's a story mode with gorgeous comic-book-styled panels by a veteran Toaplan artist, an intense arcade mode, the ability to play with a friend where you share available credits and a time-based Score Attack. There's plenty of unlockables to discover as well.

One welcome addition is the ability to change the speed of your ship, which makes dodging through the bullet-dense patterns of bosses a lot easier. There's a good variety to the numerous enemy waves you encounter and the bosses we faced off against were suitably challenging too. It's shaping up to be a great release when it drops 30 July.

We won't spend too much time on *Rushing Beat X: Return Of Brawl Brothers* as there's a review on page 94, but it's a solid update of the Nineties-based scrolling fighter, with some neat mechanics and a nice range of combatants to master.

The third game we went hands-on with was *Taito Milestones 4*,

» [PC] The hits aren't quite as obvious on *Taito Milestones 4*, but it still includes fun games like *Don Doko Don*.

» [PC] We know very little about *FZ: Formation Z*, but it certainly looks like a game we'll enjoy playing.

» [PC] While the games in *Marvel MaXimum Collection* aren't always great, the *Spidey & Venom* titles are now extremely expensive.

» [PC] We enjoyed *Rushing Beat X: Return Of Brawl Brothers*. You'll find our review later in the issue.

which is also out shortly. The games are all Taito titles, they've all been converted by Hamster, so the emulation is of a high quality and there's numerous extras to enhance the experience. As with previous *Taito Milestones* releases, several games are currently exclusive to the collection and include *Arkanoid*, *Kuri Kinton*, *Syvalion* and *Cameltry*, but the biggest surprise is the change of publisher as past releases have been by ININ Games and Strictly Limited Games.

We had a lot of fun with this one, but it's worth noting that it lacks the big hitters of the earlier collections, although the likes of *Arkanoid*, *Cameltry* and *Don Doko Don* are still a lot of fun. The remaining games in the ten-strong collection are *The Ninja Kids*, *Water Ski*, *Field Day*, *Bonze Adventure* and *Typhoon Gal*.

Although we didn't go hands-on with them, other titles to look out for from Clear River Games include *Culdcept Begins (16 July)*, *Marvel MaXimum Collection (out now)* and *FZ: Formation Z (19 June)*. *Culdcept Begins* is an interesting one as it marks the first game in the *Culdcept* series for a decade (*Culdcept Revolt* was a 3DS exclusive). The card-based strategy title has been around since the late-Nineties and that original game, now known as *Culdcept: The First*, should also be releasing later this year. *FZ: Formation Z* is also due, but if we're honest, we know very little about this game, other than that it's an update of an old Jaleco arcade game that we don't remember ever playing. It certainly looks like it could be a lot of fun, though.

> "What surprised us most with Truxton Extreme is the sheer amount of content it offers"

Marvel MaXimum Collection should be out now, and we're betting this one is going to be extremely popular. While not all the games it features can be said to be true classics, several of them are now extremely expensive, making the physical version of this a great alternative to the pricey second-hand market.

The collection includes *X-Men: The Arcade Game*, *Captain America And The Avengers*, *Spider-Man & Venom: Maximum Carnage*, *Venom & Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety*, *Spider-Man & X-Men: Arcade's Revenge* and *Silver Surfer*. That's a decent selection of titles and there are numerous extras and quality-of-life options as well, with the ability to play *X-Men: The Arcade Game* online with Rollback Netcode. Needless to say, Marvel fans will be champing at the bit to play this.

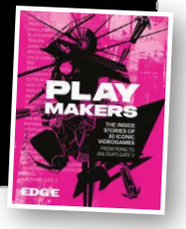
As physical collectors who have had to rely on importing games from Japan or America, it's pleasing to see that more of these titles are becoming easily available in Europe. If you want to see the entire range of games available from Clear River Games you can visit its online store, which is at shop.clearrivergames.com ✱

BIG ON SURVIVAL HORROR

There's been some good news for fans of survival horror games lately. Capcom recently announced that *Resident Evil: Requiem* (reviewed on page 90) has already passed six million sales and it recently confirmed that DLC is now on the way as well. Konami also revealed that the late-2024 remake of *Silent Hill 2* has passed five million sales. Granted, it has taken far longer to achieve, but it highlights there's plenty of interest in the series still.

MAKING A PLAY

Play Makers is a new book from Welbeck that goes behind the scenes of 30 classic games. Based on articles from our sister magazine *Edge*, the included games range from retro essentials like *Pong* and *Doom*, to more modern hits like *Assassin's Creed*, *Left 4 Dead* and *The Beatles: Rock Band*. Priced at £25, it's available from uk.bookshop.org and other retailers now.



Who is Mike Mika?
Mike Mika's official videogame career began in the Nineties, working on Game Boy Color titles like *Klax* and *Alice In Wonderland*. He's now the studio head of Digital Eclipse, a studio acclaimed for its reverential treatment of classic games.

Illegal formation:

The making of NFL Blitz for Game Boy – part 1

I must confess, I never liked, understood, or followed American football. I was a 100% grade-a nerd, and my only interest about the game was how it gave Flash Gordon's character some kind of depth, but even then I was more of a Vultan fan. I just wanted to get that out there, because at the beginning of my videogames career, understanding American football was the key to launching my career (or possibly destroying it completely).

The pivotal life moment occurred inside a double-decker McDonald's in Burlingame, California, somewhere near the Cow Palace convention centre. Not a particularly inspirational place to make a life decision. Amid the potent smell of French fries and beef patties, I signed a contract to make *NFL Blitz* for Nintendo's Game Boy. Three months. That was the schedule. And I had a full-time job writing for *Next Generation* magazine.

That meant development of the game had to happen at night, in a one-bedroom apartment that I shared with my girlfriend. She was thrilled.

Around this time I had just finished a conversion of *Yars' Revenge* for Telegames for the Game Boy. It paid enough money for me to buy a nice stereo receiver and a pair of rather cool speakers. I thought, if I could do that, I could do anything on the Game Boy.

This was also my first time working with Digital Eclipse, where, many years later, I happily remain. I think that kind of longevity in one place was the result of being too dumb to know I was in over my head.

All I needed to do was:
- Learn how football actually worked
- Learn true Game Boy development
- Translate logic from the arcade game
- Write the whole thing in assembly
- Work nights after my day job
- Somehow manage a relationship
- And ship it all in three months

> "Football, it turns out, has a surprising number of rules"

Honestly? At the time it sounded completely reasonable. Because I was stupid. No, naive is a better word. Because naivety, it turns out, is a kind of superpower. When you're young, you haven't yet learned all the things you're not supposed to do. Everything still exists inside the realm of possibility.

You assume that if you just work hard enough, the universe will sort itself out.

My development hardware wasn't exactly standard either. I obtained it from a guy in Alabama whose father was on the dev team for the ColecoVision, which gave it a kind of legitimacy I guess?

But still. Homemade hardware. Three-month schedule. One-bedroom apartment. Day job. Then there was the football problem. To me, football looked like a war game. There were front lines, territorial advances, formations that resembled battlefield strategy. How hard could it be? Football, it turns out, has a surprising number of rules.

The reason I loved *NFL Blitz* wasn't actually the football. It was the chaos. The ridiculous post-play hits. Players getting slammed into the turf after the whistle.

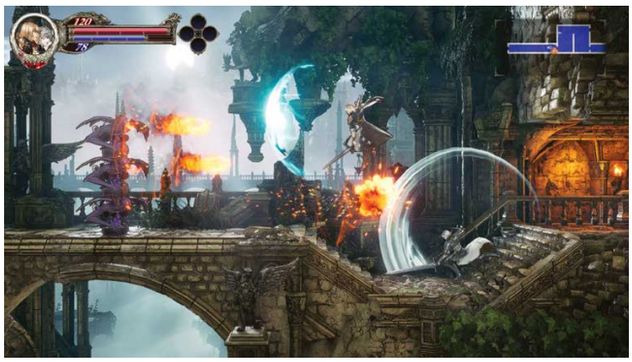
The Game Boy CPU operates at a brisk 4MHz. The graphics were simple. Getting any sense of those tackles on that small screen would be near impossible. We were making a *Blitz* game that couldn't deliver the 'Blitz' part.

My solution was... questionable and I'll share that with you in the next issue. *

Do you agree with Mike's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK | retrogamermag.bsky.social | @RetroGamer_Mag | retrogamer@futurenet.com

» Sega shared the following image of Hideki Sato on its various social channels. He was president from 2001 to 2003.



» [PlayStation 5] Shutaro Iida was working on *Bloodstained: The Scarlet Engagement*, which will release later this year.

GREAT LOSSES

THREE JAPANESE ICONS OF GAMING HAVE SADLY PASSED

The early months of 2026 has seen the passing of several notable members of the Japanese videogames industry.

Hayama Akito, a member of Resetetra revealed that Kazuo Sawa, the musician behind a number of *Kunio-kun* titles, as well as *Totally Rad*, *The Battle For Olympus* and *Mazin Wars* had passed after the news was shared by Sawa's son on 7 February. Although Sawa's discography was fairly small, his son suspects that he worked on many more games beyond the Famicom era due to his father taking NDAs very seriously and therefore not revealing his involvement with them.

On 16 February Sega shared news of the passing of Hideki Sato on its various social channels. Sato was the designer behind virtually all of Sega's home consoles and became incredibly important to the company, eventually becoming president from 2001 to 2003. "His leadership helped lay the foundation of Sega, and his contributions had a significant and lasting impact on the entire gaming industry," Sega posted.

On the same day, the official social-media channel for *Bloodstained: The Scarlet Engagement* revealed that Shutaro Iida, a long-time collaborator of Koji Igarashi on various *Castlevania* games had died on 10 February at the age of 51. "We are deeply saddened by the loss of SHUTARO, our creative director. On behalf of the team, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time. Thank you for everything, SHUTARO."

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the friends and family of Kazuo, Hideki and Shutaro.

ART LOST

SONY SHUTTERS BLUEPOINT GAMES

The games industry has been hit by numerous layoffs over the last couple of years and Bluepoint Games has become the latest studio to be shut down after the news was revealed by Bloomberg. Founded in 2005 by the late Andy O'Neil and Marco Thrush, the studio quickly became known for its impressive remaster work. It created some genuinely excellent remasters of a number of beloved games, including *God Of War I* and *II*, *Ico*, *Shadow Of The Colossus*, several *Metal Gear Solid* games and the original *Uncharted* trilogy.

After remaking both *Shadow Of The Colossus* and *Demon's Souls*, Sony acquired Bluepoint in 2021 and things went extremely quiet. In January 2025, it was revealed that Bluepoint had been working on a live service *God Of War* game, which had subsequently been cancelled. Despite the critical acclaim of its *Demon's Souls* remake, Bloomberg also revealed that FromSoftware turned down a request from the studio to remake *Bloodborne*. Roughly 70 members of staff are expected to lose their jobs when the studio closes in March.

» [PlayStation 3] Bluepoint Games was to games preservation what Criterion is to movies, it's terrible it has been shuttered.

» [PlayStation 4] We can't understand the reasoning behind shutting down Bluepoint, it seems a foolishly silly decision.

A RARE TREAT

HyperMegaTech! recently announced a Rare-based Super Pocket that will include 14 games. Unfortunately, it's not quite as exciting as we first thought due to eight of the available games already appearing on *Rare Collection 1*. Still, if you don't own that Evercade cartridge we can see the likes of *Banjo-Kazooie*, *Snake Rattle 'N Roll*, *Battletoads In Battlemaniacs*, *Slalom* and *RC Pro Am II* appealing to the casual market that the Super Pocket caters to.

ALL CHANGE AT MICROSOFT

Phil Spencer will be retiring from Microsoft's games division. He's been a pivotal part of the console division since the Xbox was released in 2001 but is finally leaving Microsoft after nearly 40 years with the company. Xbox president Sarah Bond has resigned, leaving Asha Sharma, previously Microsoft's president of CoreAI to take over as the new CEO of Microsoft Gaming. Matt Booty has been promoted to CCO of the division.

Who is Iain Lee?
Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine

The walk of shame

I recently had to do the CEX walk of shame. I've had a fear of taking things to charity shops ever since a load I wanted to drop off was rejected. Imagine being in Cancer Research with some of your old clothes and the lady behind the counter (who I assume is a scientist taking a break from her research laboratory out the back) looks at it with contempt and says, "No thank you." I then had to thank her, slowly turn around and leave. The clothes got taken to a tip. I've been back to different shops a few times but get the same level of anxiety I feel when I answer a call from an unknown number. Still, we are supposed to push ourselves to do something uncomfortable every day. [Really? Sod that – Ed]

With that thought in mind, I decided to take two games into one of those second-hand game shops. I really wanted the new *Doom* and also the *Rare Replay* compilation. The first was £50 and the second £3. I knew that the PS5 versions of *Cyberpunk* and *Kingdom Come Deliverance II* that I wanted to trade probably wouldn't cover the two games and I was happy to pay the difference.

After waiting about 20 minutes, I was beckoned over by a child. I handed her the four discs. She opened *Cyberpunk* first and after inspecting it for 15 seconds said, "We can't take this, it's scratched." I had a quick glimpse and fair play, she was absolutely spot-on, it was a mess. I metaphorically kicked myself because I should have checked it first.

She then moved to *Kingdom Come Deliverance II*, a game I'd only had a few weeks. I stopped playing it after an hour or two. There's a character in it who kept swearing at me and actually called me the worst swear word in the world. I told him where to go and uninstalled the game. I get called that on social media too much already, I don't need some dude in a game belittling me.

I was shocked when I was told that this game was also scratched and unacceptable. I suddenly had the flush of shame. I felt my face go red and my breath tighten. I mumbled some nonsense about it being the fault of my kids.

I then said, "I'll put *Doom* back then," and had to walk the length of the shop to put it back on the shelf. I paid my £3 for *Rare Replay* and left the shop.

To compound things, I looked like Ray Cropper from *Coronation Street*. Old man's coat, unshaven and carrying a Tesco bag. This was humiliating on every level.

I got back to my car and checked *Kingdom Come Deliverance II*… and you know what? There was not a single scratch on it. I went forensic Quincy style and THERE WAS NO SCRATCH. The thing is, there was no way I would go back and question it, and I also can never take another game to any of these shops. When I buy a game now, I'm stuck with it forever.

Dear God, the shiver of shame has just engulfed me again. Time to go and eat to push down my feelings. *

> "To compound things, I looked like Ray Cropper from Coronation Street"

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK | retrogamermag.bsky.social | @RetroGamer_Mag | retrogamer@futurenet.com

Save with our pre-built

DEALS

Includes FREE next-day shipping

VIEW DEALS

PCSPECIALIST

www.pcspecialist.co.uk/**deals**

Who is Paul Rose?
Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

A world of mystery

When I was 10 or 11, my friends and I would take our bikes to a local park, which had a large wooded area. It had once been the grounds of a large mansion owned by the Blackwell family – of Crosse & Blackwell pickle fame.

Since then they've thinned out the woodland, but when I was a kid it was really dense… and among the trees, as we were gathering supplies for our camp, we'd often find the stone foundations of the former mansion.

It felt strange and otherworldly – even though we were just a ten-minute walk from home. We could believe we were in another world – and it's that feeling of escape that the *Zelda* franchise so beautifully captures.

There hasn't been a *Zelda* game I haven't loved. Actually… no. Not completely true. I admit it… I did struggle a tiny bit with the time-loop aspect of *Majora's Mask*. And that looming moon face freaked me out. And I didn't much like that weird one where you could only move in time to the beat of the music. That was far too much faff for my limited brain.

Let's say… with the exception of *Majora's Mask*, I've loved all of the mainline *Zelda* games. And that, for me, includes the handheld iterations. Like many of you, *A Link To The Past* was my first taste of the franchise, and it blew my mind. I'd played RPGs before, but I'd never felt so much freedom playing anything as I did on my first trip to Hyrule.

Miyamoto, as we know, was inspired to create the series based on his childhood spent roaming the hills and forests of Japan – and it's that sense of unbridled childhood freedom, playing out in the woods with friends, picking up random sticks, funny-shaped rocks, or feathers… that the series has always succeeded in capturing.

How does he do that? It's pure alchemy. I mean, on a surface level, the worlds of *Zelda* don't make any sense. There's nothing to suggest any sort of functioning society. It's very strange worldbuilding once you break down each of the games. And yet… they work by harnessing a feeling.

It's nostalgic for an imagined childhood – where sticks became swords and jars could be used to capture fairies. By making Hyrule so abstract and weird, it lends the series a beautiful universality – making a child's experience in Japan somehow universal to the child within all of us, no matter where we grew up.

My personal favourite is *The Wind Waker* – which might be controversial. I know there are those who felt it was a failed experiment, who couldn't see past those cel-shaded visuals. I remember the first time I encountered someone who hated the graphics, and I was genuinely taken aback. I couldn't understand how anybody could see it as anything other than a visual triumph.

In purely aesthetic terms, it's still the best-looking game in the entire series. I'm not going to be swayed on that. It's a masterpiece of visual design, has one of the best stories, and some of the most varied gameplay of them all.

And maybe that's why *Zelda* has endured. Not because of its puzzles, or its dungeons, or even its stories. It endures because it captures something most of us only get to experience once: that strange moment in childhood when the world still feels huge, mysterious, and full of hidden places. When a patch of woods can become a kingdom…

> "Like many of you, A Link To The Past was my first taste of the franchise, and it blew my mind"

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK | retrogamermag.bsky.social | @RetroGamer_Mag | retrogamer@futurenet.com

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A CLASSIC GAME?

Discover the stories behind 30 legendary videogames spanning more than 50 years. *Playmakers* is packed with concept art, behind-the-scenes photography and exclusive interviews, curated from the pages of EDGE.

AVAILABLE NOW
WHEREVER YOU BUY YOUR BOOKS

EDGE

WELBECK

» One thing we love about The Spectrum is how it nails the feel of the original rubber keyboard.

The Spectrum

Darren Melbourne and Chris Smith on RGL's new colour variant of its popular system

Words by Darran Jones

Retro Games Ltd is no stranger to launching mini-consoles and has had success with various devices such as The Spectrum, THEA500 Mini and THEC64 Mini. Its latest system is a limited-edition colour variant of The Spectrum, so we were keen to find out more about it.

Have you been surprised by the success of The Spectrum?

Darren Melbourne: We're always cautious when forecasting our projects, but like our previous releases, the community really lit up when we announced The Spectrum. Retro home computers (big and small) all have passionate and knowledgeable communities, and our goal is to meet as many expectations as we can within commercial limitations. Seeing the enthusiasm from long-time fans and from people discovering the computer for the first time has been incredibly rewarding for the whole team.

The original white Spectrum was released to commemorate the Spectrum hitting a million sales. Has The Spectrum found similar success?

Chris Smith: We would, of course, love to say yes, but that is a huge number for where the retro console market is today. However, we are more than happy with the success we are enjoying with all our hardware releases, and The Spectrum is no exception.

Is there any reason why no new games have been included with this version of The Spectrum?

DM: Licensing retro games is now a very challenging and expensive process. Over the past ten years or so, we have seen a massive growth in retro gaming, and a downside of that growth is the associated increase in the perceived value of old games.

Finding games that are available, of suitable quality, and still within budget is becoming increasingly challenging.

» Chris Smith is the chief technology officer at Retro Games Ltd and says the new white model includes the latest firmware.

CS: With The Spectrum we believe we already have a great mix of games, and as the White Edition is a fun collector's release, there was no need to change perfection. Across all our systems, we've curated a strong range of high-quality games spanning multiple genres, most of which are must-have classics. And of course, users can also add their own games via USB on all our machines.

» Darren Melbourne is the licensing director of Retro Games Ltd and explains that "tracking down the true legal rights holders can be extremely difficult".

What was the reasoning to make THE PRINTER and a new Crash magazine for the Limited Edition of the system?

CS: THE PRINTER, as we are of course calling it, has been a significant technical challenge for us, but a great addition to our range and one that the true Spectrum fans will love.

Has this new edition of The Spectrum had any hardware updates to it?

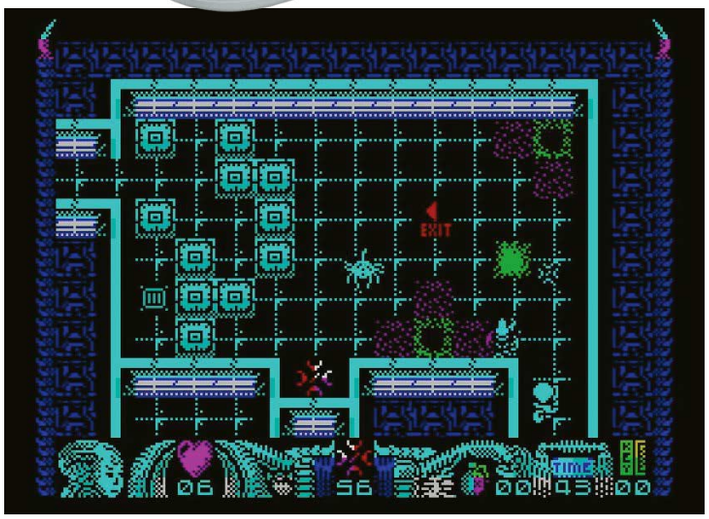
CS: Other than the complete change in colour, no. The Spectrum went through a good number of years of development, and we see it as the pinnacle of what can be done with the machine at the mass market price we are offering. From the use of high-quality plastics,

> “I think you will agree that The Spectrum, and the RGL family of machines that came before it, are exceptional”
> **CHRIS SMITH**

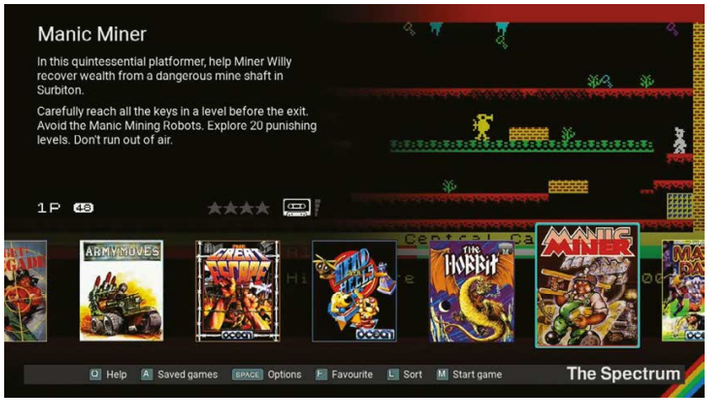
» The Microdrive lets you add your own programs and includes Fusion Paint for use on THE PRINTER.

» If you don't care for joysticks, a white version of RGL's THEGAMEPAD is also available.

» Here's the full contents of the Collector's Edition, which includes THE PRINTER, a Quickshot II joystick and spiral-bound manual as exclusives.



» [The Spectrum] You won't find any new games on this version of The Spectrum, but it still has a great selection of classics and homebrew releases like *Alien Girl*.


Manic Miner
In this quintessential platformer, help Miner Willy recover wealth from a dangerous mine shaft in Surbiton.
Carefully reach all the keys in a level before the exit. Avoid the Manic Mining Robots. Explore 20 punishing levels. Don't run out of air.
1P
ARMY MOVES
MANIC MINER
Help
Saved games
Options
Favourite
Sort
Start game
The Spectrum

» The Spectrum features great emulation and plenty of classic games, including *Manic Miner*.

silicon for the keys, the metal keyboard plate, to the mainboard featuring a powerful and highly reliable SoC, I think you will agree that The Spectrum, and the RGL family of machines that came before it, are exceptional. That's not to say that we will continue to improve our offering as technology improves. The White Edition does feature the latest The Spectrum firmware, offering even more compatibility and technical features. We pride ourselves on continuing development post launch to deliver the best user experience we can.

Is there the option to perhaps release new licensed Spectrum games via the supplied USB drive?

DM: The USB drive was another nod to the fans. For the original The Spectrum release we made a small number of USB Mini-Microdrives which went down very well in the community. With the White and Collector's Editions, it made total sense to include one in the box. It is unfortunately blank, as adding any new games to it would cause us to fall foul of age-rating systems around the world. And users can of course source ROMs they already own and run them on The Spectrum.

In addition, what we really love about the retro world as it is today is the huge number of new games being released which can often be downloaded for free or at a small charge, put on the USB drive and played directly on The Spectrum. While we can't comment on any specific future plans, I think it's a wonderful idea to place new games or compilations on USB drives and release them into the market.

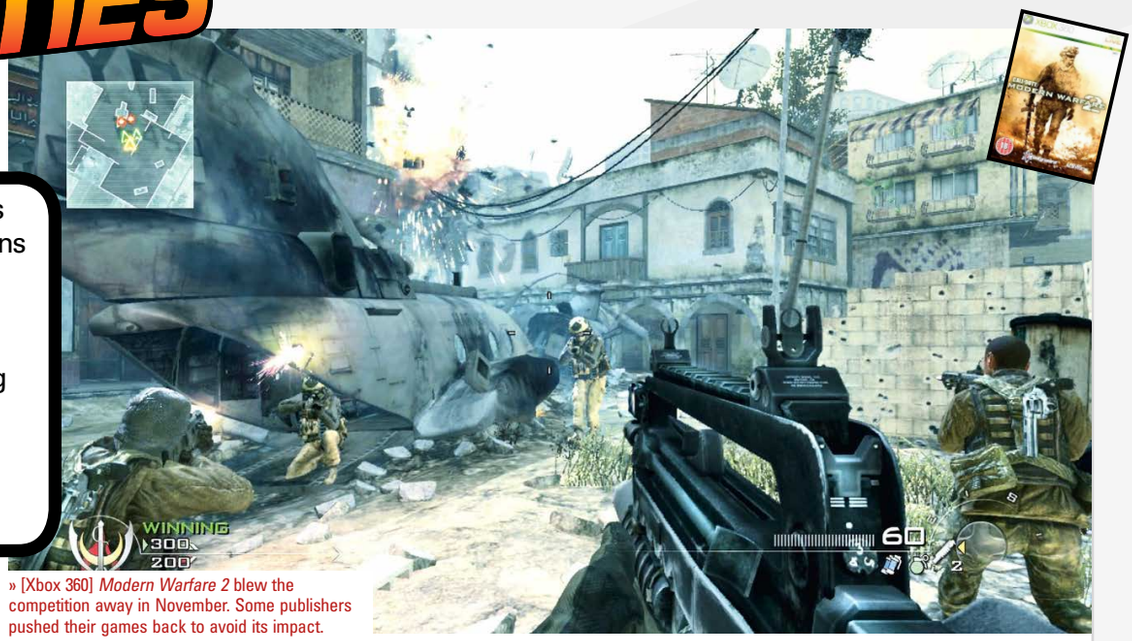
What can you tell us about any upcoming projects you're working on?

DM: We are, of course, deep into THEA1200, our flagship Amiga compatible full-sized home-computer release. After the release of THEC64 Mini, fans were asking for a full-sized machine, and we delivered THEC64 a couple of years later. Initially perceived as niche, this has gone from strength to strength and is still selling well five years down the line.

As for future projects, we're always brainstorming ways we can bring new hardware to the retro community. There are many challenges to overcome, not least licensing, but you will be very excited with our future plans I am sure. ✱

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

NOVEMBER 2009 – Christmas is approaching and the big guns are getting ready to fire their festive offerings. The result is a heady gaming cocktail of platforming, FPSing, stealthing and skateboarding. Join Martyn Carroll as he rounds up the month's most notable releases



» [Xbox 360] *Modern Warfare 2* blew the competition away in November. Some publishers pushed their games back to avoid its impact.

NEWS NOVEMBER 2009

The weather dominated the UK news this month. In the time before we named storms (so let's make one up), Storm Colin caused severe flooding in parts of Dorset and Sussex. Then, extreme rainfall resulted in around 200 people having to be rescued from Cockermouth in the Lake District, as the town experienced the worst flooding in its history.

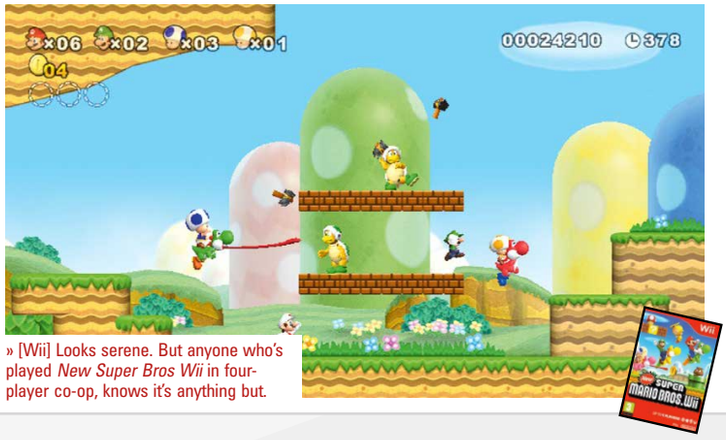
On 9 November, Germany marked the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall with a Festival Of Freedom – and yes, David Hasselhoff was involved in the celebrations held at the Brandenburg Gate.

On 16 November it was announced that British actor Edward Woodward had died, aged 79. The star of Seventies folk horror classic *The Wicker Man* and later the US crime serial *The Equalizer*, passed away in hospital after a period of illness. In other entertainment news, the second *Twilight* movie, *New Moon*, generated record-breaking box office returns on its opening – leading to lots of fan snobbery. Similarly, Susan Boyle's debut album, *I Dreamed A Dream*, was released this month and became the fastest-selling UK debut album in history. Not bad for a *Britain's Got Talent* runner-up.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 2009

This is one of the busiest months of the year for new games, when the biggest AAA releases and franchise updates typically arrive to capture Christmas sales. There's plenty to wade through, but we must begin with Nintendo's *New Super Mario Bros Wii*, simply on account of it being the first proper 2D *Mario* platformer for a home console since *Super Mario World*, released for the SNES 19 years prior.

When it was announced, many believed it was a port of the 2006 DS game, but no, this was a brand-new game that introduced simultaneous play. One to four players could now assault levels together, and while it wasn't able to fix the inherent pitfalls in co-op platforming, it came pretty close. And it was loads of fun. "It's essential," asserted *Official Nintendo Magazine* in its 96% Gold Award review. "This is the sort of game you bought your Nintendo console for, not those daft minigame collections." The other mags were a little cooler, mainly due to its multiplayer focus. *NGamer* awarded it 85%, calling it a "social experiment", and it received the same score from *GamesMaster*. *Edge* gave it 7/10.

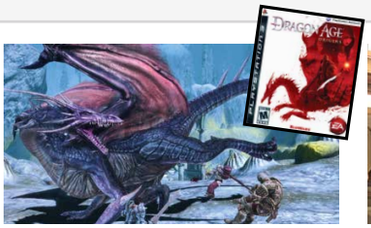


» [Wii] Looks serene. But anyone who's played *New Super Bros Wii* in four-player co-op, knows it's anything but.

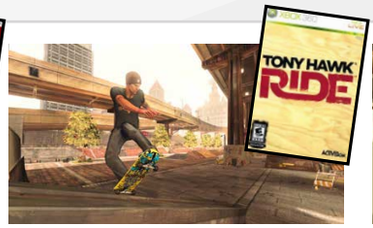
While it wasn't the best reviewed *Mario* game, it sold like Bowser-breath-baked cakes, achieving lifetime sales of 30.3 million and going on to become the fourth best-selling Wii release of all time (behind the two *Wii Sports* games and *Mario Kart Wii*).

If we restrict sales to just 2009 then *New Super Mario Bros Wii* was surpassed by a non-Nintendo game. Activision's *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* would amass multiformat sales of 11.7m before the year was out, despite only being released on 10 November. Developed by series creator Infinity Ward, this was the sequel to the game that turned *Call Of Duty* into an entertainment phenomenon. The new entry was a critical hit too, earning 9/10 from *games™*, 9/10 from *Edge*, and a full house 10/10 from the *Official PlayStation Magazine* who said, "The world's biggest game just got bigger."

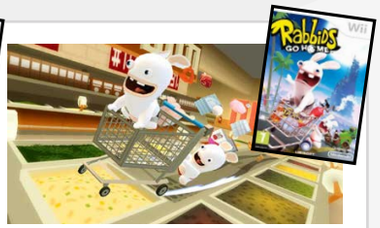
Arriving a week later was a new entry in a series that would soon rival *Call Of Duty* as an annual franchise monster. Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed II* introduced us to new hero Ezio and shifted the setting to Renaissance-era Italy.



» [PC] *Dragon Age: Origins* introduced us to the world of Thedas and some of its scaly inhabitants.



» [Xbox 360] *Tony Hawk: Ride*. The promise – stylin' in a skater's paradise, at one with the board…



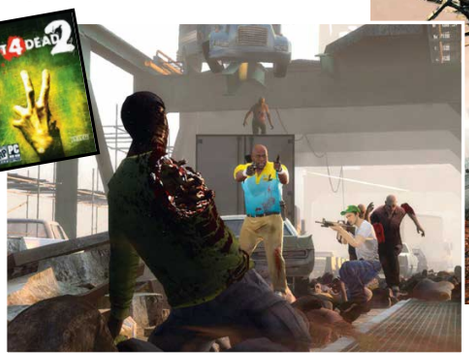
» [Wii] The brilliantly bonkers *Rabbids Go Home*. We love it to the moon and back.

The result was a superior sequel that critics loved. Both the *Official PlayStation Magazine* and *games™* awarded it 9/10, with the latter praising its advances over the 2007 original, calling it, "A brilliant game, and a vast improvement." One interesting facet of this period is that the big publishers liked to leave no stone unturned. So while Activision released *Modern Warfare 2* for the Xbox 360, PS3 and PC, it also put out *Modern Warfare Reflex* on the Wii and *Modern Warfare Mobilized* on the DS. Similarly, Ubisoft also released pared-back *Assassin's Creed* games for the DS and PSP.

Another highlight of the month was Valve's *Left 4 Dead 2* which splattered onto the Xbox 360 and PC to strong reviews across the board, including a 9/10 from *Edge*. Also landing well was *Dragon Age: Origins*, the inaugural entry in BioWare's heroic fantasy series. Duffer of the month by some margin was *Tony Hawk: Ride*, the tenth main entry in Activision's skateboard series that made a desperate grab for the Christmas market by bundling the game with an expensive plastic skateboard that middle-aged men gyrated on to pop tricks. *Edge* damned it to hell, awarding it 3/10 and calling it "deeply flawed".

With Christmas just around the corner, let's wrap things up with perhaps the surprise offering of the month. Those pesky Rabbids from Ubisoft's *Rayman Raving Rabbids* games finally turned up in their own outing, *Rabbids Go Home*, for the Wii. Despite releasing in the inescapable shadow of *New Super Mario Bros Wii*, this joyful supermarket sweep was rated higher than Nintendo's game in some magazines, receiving 86% from *NGamer* and 96% from *GamesMaster*. For Wii owners, these two exclusives made a brilliant Christmas brace – years before the two parties would officially collaborate in *Mario + Rabbids Kingdom Battle* on the Switch.

Join us next time as we focus on December 2009, looking at the games that closed out the Noughties in style – including a return to the wilds of Hyrule and the streets of Silent Hill. ✱



» [PC] *Left 4 Dead 2* nicely built on the co-op gameplay that distinguished the original game.

» [PlayStation 3] *Assassin's Creed II* appears to be channelling something here, but we can't quite put our finger on it.

CHARTS

NOVEMBER 2009

PS3

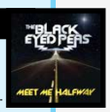
1 – **PES 2010** (Konami)
2 – **FIFA 10** (EA)
3 – **Tekken 6** (Namco)
4 – **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves** (Sony)
5 – **WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010** (THQ)

PSP

1 – **FIFA 10** (EA)
2 – **Gran Turismo** (Sony)
3 – **Football Manager Handheld 2010** (Sega)
4 – **GTA Chinatown Wars** (Rockstar)
5 – **WWE Smackdown Vs Raw 2010** (THQ)

DS

1 – **Professor Layton And Pandora's Box** (Nintendo)
2 – **Scribblenauts** (Warner Bros)
3 – **Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days** (Square Enix)
4 – **Professor Layton And The Curious Village** (Nintendo)
5 – **MySims Agents** (EA)



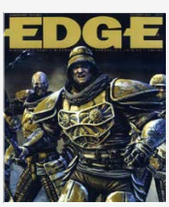
MUSIC

1 – **Meet Me Halfway** (The Black Eyed Peas)
2 – **Fight For This Love** (Cheryl Cole)
3 – **Down** (Jay Sean Ft Lil Wayne)
4 – **Bad Boys** (Alexandra Burke Ft Flo Rida)
5 – **Bad Romance** (Lady Gaga)

THIS MONTH IN…

Xbox World 360

"2009 is the Year Of The Delay," bemoaned the mag, in a report highlighting several anticipated titles that had been bumped to 2010. They included *Bayonetta*, *BioShock 2*, *Splinter Cell: Conviction* and *Red Dead Redemption*. Patience guys, it'll be worth the wait.



Edge

The marketplace dominance of *Modern Warfare 2* is discussed this month, along with its controversial price point. "Such is its dominant position that an increase in its RRP to £55 has been viewed more as a mark of confidence in its quality rather than opportunism…"

GamesMaster

The lads at *GamesMaster* love the look of the new PSP Go, which launched in October. "Hats off to Sony for delivering the most handsome piece of handheld kit currently available." There's a sticking point though, and it's not the lack of a UMD drive. "It's just far too expensive!"

000245
STATUS
ENERGY

3D Starfighter

STAR WARS ON A BUDGET

» AMSTRAD CPC » 1987 » CODEMASTERS

Due to coming from a single-parent family, money was always tight growing up, so the vast majority of games I could afford were budget games. Maybe it was because of the *Dizzy* games, but I found myself owning more titles from Codemasters in my collection than any other budget label.

Often these purchases were carefully considered and based on reviews, but I would sometimes choose something on a whim, because the back of the box took my fancy or I had some rare birthday money to spend. *3D Starfighter* was one of those titles that was a purchase that wasn't given much thought, and in retrospect, I probably should have read some reviews about it.

Like many youngsters of my age, *Star Wars* had a huge impact on me and if I wasn't reenacting key scenes from the original trilogy with friends, I was reading comics, making jigsaws and playing with my *Star Wars* figures.

3D Starfighter's back cover offered exciting space battles, similar to the ones I'd seen in George Lucas' film and while the fighters that looked like disembodied alien heads were nothing like ships found in the movie, the game itself still appealed to me.

Sadly, *3D Starfighter* is a rather generic blaster and it struggled to hold my attention for very long. There's plenty to see and do in it and the visuals are nice enough, but I couldn't imagine it as a *Star Wars* game like I could with *Deathchase* (pretending you were on Speeder bikes) and *3D Starstrike* (pretending I was Luke in the final Death Star assault).

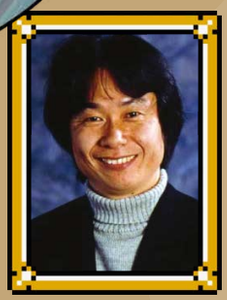
I'm not sure what it was about *3D Starfighter*, but it just didn't fire my imagination in the way that *Deathchase* and *3D Starstrike* did. Maybe I was expecting too much from it, but it just didn't deliver on any of the thrills and excitement that the back of the box promised.

I tried foisting *3D Starfighter* off to my mates, but none of them were interested, so it became stuck in my collection and eventually ended up in a skip with all my other Amstrad games. But that dear reader, is a sad story for another time. ✱

THE CHRONICLES OF ZELDA

WHEN NINTENDO RELEASED THE LEGEND OF ZELDA 40 YEARS AGO, NOBODY COULD HAVE PREDICTED HOW SUCCESSFUL, INFLUENTIAL AND BELOVED THE SERIES WOULD BECOME. TO CELEBRATE THIS MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY, WE TRACE ITS RICH AND STORIED HISTORY THROUGH THE WORDS OF ITS CREATORS

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL



» Shigeru Miyamoto, the primary creator of *The Legend Of Zelda*, has had a hand in every game in the series.

They say the best legends are destined to be retold, and over the past four decades, the stories behind the creation of *The Legend Of Zelda* series have been shared countless times. Its primary creator and torchbearer, Shigeru Miyamoto, is not shy when it comes to talking about the series. Back in 1997/8, in the long lead up to the release of *Ocarina Of Time*, he was in full PR mode, giving enough interviews to fill a tome or two. You might argue that the voices of Miyamoto and his team have been exhausted on the subject of *Zelda*. Yet, the various interviews often throw up fascinating tales and obscure details that deserve spotlighting – particularly as many were conducted in Japanese and not translated until years later.

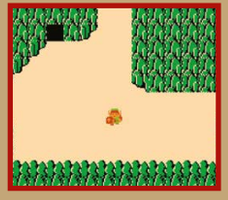
To tell the story of *Zelda*, we have sought the insights of three people who are integral to its continued success: Miyamoto, series co-creator Takashi Tezuka, and current series producer Eiji Aonuma. Let's go back to the beginning, and start with Miyamoto's memories of the original game, *The Legend Of Zelda*. Establishing a trend that many *Zelda* games would follow in the future, it was developed to take advantage of new Nintendo hardware. "Development began on *The Legend Of Zelda* in 1984, as a launch game for the Famicom Disk System," he said, in a Q&A included with the 1994 audio CD *The Legend Of Zelda: Sound And Drama*. "We had started development on *Super Mario Bros* shortly before, so we were extremely busy with planning, with the two projects progressing simultaneously. It was very difficult to finish *Mario* and then get the *Mario* programmers involved in the final push to finish *The Legend Of Zelda*." It's quite amazing to think that both games – titles of such significance – were in development at the same time by largely the same team. Even more so as the two games were very different: *Mario* was a linear platformer, *Zelda* was a sprawling adventure with role-playing elements.

"WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PUZZLE-SOLVING ELEMENT AND WHETHER WE'D PITCHED THE DIFFICULTY LEVEL CORRECTLY"
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

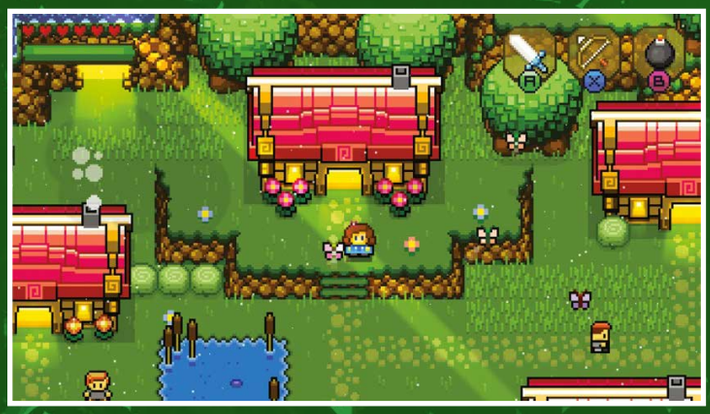
The difference in approach was dictated by cost. Famicom cartridges were durable and loaded instantly, but they were expensive to produce. And bigger games meant larger ROMs and higher costs. Hence why the eight worlds of *Super Mario Bros* were crammed into a 40KB cart. Famicom floppies were cheaper to produce and offered 112KB of storage per disk, which allowed for more expansive games. This opened the door to the Kingdom Of Hyrule, with its large overworld and nine distinct dungeons to explore. There were other technical benefits too. "We were eager to take advantage of the Disk System's features," said Miyamoto. "We were able to register names, add better sound, save the player's progress, and incorporate other new ideas, which made the game a lot of fun to make." But because the game drops players into a hostile world, with enemies on nearly every screen and minimal signposting, Miyamoto and his team were nervous. "We were worried that people wouldn't know what ▶

» Eiji Aonuma directed *Majora's Mask*, *The Wind Waker* and *Twilight Princess*. He currently serves as the *Zelda* series producer.

» Takashi Tezuka co-designed *Zelda* alongside Miyamoto. He directed *A Link To The Past* and *Link's Awakening*.



» [NES] The legend begins. Link sets out on his epic quest, his progress underscored by Koji Kondo's iconic theme music.



» [Switch] *Blossom Tales* is a love letter to 2D Zelda games and other 16-bit adventures.

» [PC] *Demon Tides* was inspired by the 3D *Zelda* games, particularly *The Wind Waker*.

LINKS TO THE PAST

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA CONTINUES TO INFLUENCE GAME DEVELOPERS. HERE, FABRAZ'S FABIAN RASTORFER (DEMON TURF, DEMON TIDES) AND CASTLE PIXEL'S ROB MAHER (BLOSSOM TALES, BLOSSOM TALES II) REVEAL HOW THE SERIES HAS INSPIRED THEM

Can we begin by asking about your relationship with *The Legend Of Zelda* series?

Fabian Rastorfer: *Ocarina Of Time* ended up being my gateway drug into the *Zelda* world and it had a huge impact on me. It made me realise games can be more than just fun to play, they can be an entire adventure you can get immersed in. This feeling was only further amplified when I played *Majora's Mask*, which I actually found quite frightening back then!

» Fabian Rastorfer leads the team at Fabraz that developed *Demon Turf* (2021) and *Demon Tides* (2026).

Rob Maher: Some of my earliest memories are sitting cross-legged in front of a CRT television playing *Zelda* with my older brother. Every secret we uncovered felt like a discovery we had made ourselves, and every Game Over was something we shared. Later, when I got into game development, I learned that Shigeru Miyamoto originally created *The Legend Of Zelda* to capture the feeling of exploring the woods as a kid. That really reframed the series for me. It showed me that a game world can come from something very personal.

» Rob Maher is the lead creator of the two *Blossom Tales* games (2017, 2022), developed by Castle Pixel.

How influential has the series been on you and your team?

FR: I think it's *Zelda*'s approach to world design which has left a mark on most of us. Connecting locations spatially, having villages with lived-in NPCs etc. It all adds to a sense of place and immerses you wonderfully.

RM: *Blossom Tales* came from a mix of ambition and nostalgia. We grew up inspired by the classic adventure games and wondered if a small team could capture that same spirit. At the same time, I wanted to recreate the feeling of childhood exploration. It was our attempt to bottle that sense of discovery and pass it on to a new generation.

Rob, *Blossom Tales* is a homage to 2D *Zelda* games. How did you look to add originality?

RM: We always tried to strike a balance between honouring the games that inspired us and building something that felt like its own world. The storytelling framework helped a lot. We were big fans of *The Princess Bride* and always loved that grandfather and grandchild setup. Framing the game that way gives it the feeling of sitting around with friends listening to a story together, which gave us a lot of creative freedom while still keeping that classic adventure feel.

Fabian, *Demon Tides* has a strong *Wind Waker* feel…

FR: That was absolutely intentional. If you'd have asked me what my favourite *Zelda* is, I'd have answered *The Wind Waker*. I truly believe it's a timeless game, which was actually a rarity for many 3D titles back in the day due to the race to higher fidelity. It looks as beautiful today as it did back then. Its sense of exploration and discovery out in the open ocean is also unparalleled and was definitely a reference point for *Demon Tides*.

What were the biggest challenges you faced?

FR: It's hard to design levels for an open-world game, it's even harder to structure progression around it, and it's a big technical hurdle too as you need to ensure everything loads seamlessly. There's a reason *Demon Tides* took us over three years!

RM: Honestly, the hardest challenge was figuring out how to make the game fun. You are constantly asking yourself if a puzzle feels satisfying, if exploring is rewarding, and if the moment-to-moment gameplay keeps players engaged. A lot of development is just experimenting and refining until everything finally feels right.

As *Zelda* celebrates its 40th anniversary, where personally would you like to see the series go next?

FR: I believe the team over at Nintendo knows what they are doing and I'll be there for whatever they do next. I do think what *Breath Of The Wild* introduced, and *Tears Of The Kingdom* refined, has been fully explored, so I'm eager to see what new innovations they cook up.

RM: I would love to see the series explore something a little cosier alongside its adventures. Imagine building a home, becoming part of a village, and spending time with familiar characters who grow alongside you. You could still venture out into classic *Zelda*-style dungeons, but the things you bring back would help your home and community grow. A mix of life or farming sim elements with traditional dungeon exploration could make the world feel more personal and lived in.

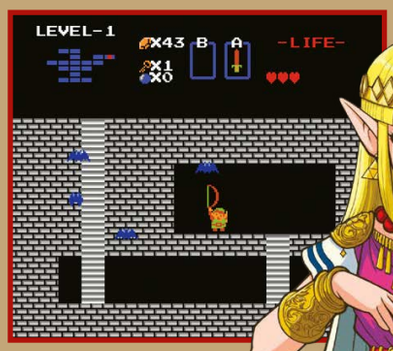
Can we expect further adventures for both of your game heroines at some point?

FR: Right now we're working on a big patch for *Demon Tides* that will feature more polish, bug fixes, quality-of-life additions and even a few new features. After that it's all about getting the game on the Switch before we decide what to do next. Who knows, the possibilities are endless.

RM: We have always imagined Lily's story as a trilogy, a full journey of growth and discovery. There is still more of her world we want to explore, and we are not ready to say goodbye to those characters yet. When the time is right, we would love to invite players back for one more adventure.

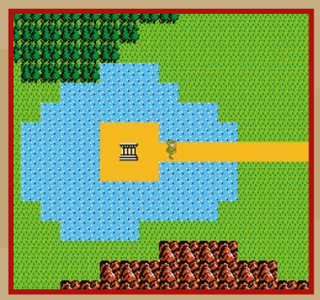
» [NES] Aha! After roaming the wilderness, Link finally finds the entrance to the first dungeon. Let the real fun begin.

» [NES] No turn-based moves here. The first boss Aquamentus is spitting deadly fireballs in our direction.



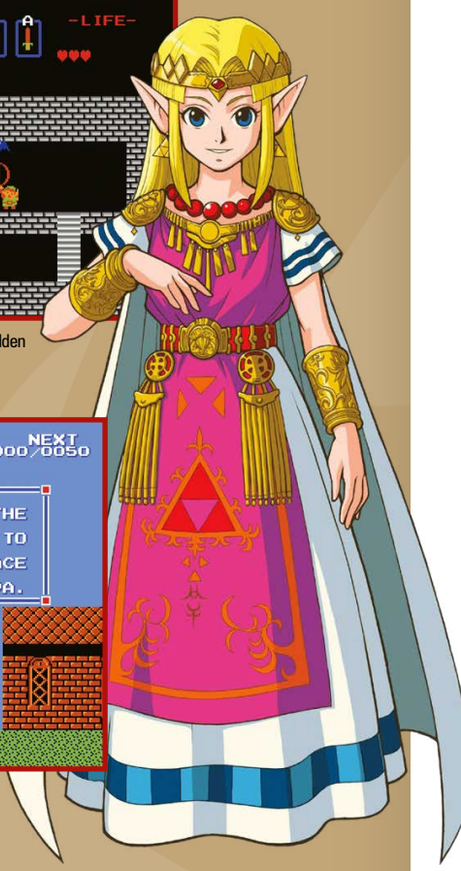
» [NES] Link discovers a bow hidden in the depths of a dungeon. This might come in handy…

» [NES] You could be forgiven for thinking that *The Adventure Of Link* is just another NES side-scrolling platformer.



» [NES] *The Adventure Of Link* is more of a traditional RPG, with the various locations linked via a navigable overworld map.

» [NES] The sequel features a number of townships where the locals offer up handy hints.



to do, even at the beginning of the game, and the game wouldn't be well received. We were also concerned about the puzzle-solving element and whether we'd pitched the difficulty level correctly. Solving a puzzle could be difficult…"

Indeed it could. We all know how progression in *Zelda* games works, where inaccessible areas are unlocked using items retrieved from dungeons (and the dungeons themselves have their own rulebook, learnt through trial and error), but back then it was all brand-new. There were clues of course, but they were often cryptic – and doubly so, when translated (somewhat loosely) from Japanese to English. Through gated progression, players were actively encouraged to explore the world, mentally map it out, and yes, get a little lost. "I wanted to create a game where the player understands the history and nature of the land, and it feels like they're exploring," said Miyamoto. "In traditional RPGs the game progresses solely through dialogue, but we wanted the player to interact with the game world using the controller, and conquer dungeons using a simple mapping system." In another 1994 interview given to *Total!* magazine, Miyamoto shared a story about his love of exploring which beautifully encapsulated his entire approach to the series. "I like to explore on my own," he revealed. "When I visit a new town, like New York, I like to walk alone at night, simply exploring the back streets and hidden places. I explore on foot for a while, then sometimes I buy a bicycle and cycle around town. Only when I know my way around a little will I buy a map. *Zelda* games are very much like this. First you explore, then you gain a useful tool – like my bicycle – and then you get a map. The map is not essential, it just makes things easier."

> "ZELDA II WAS SORT OF A FAILURE... WE ACTUALLY SEE A LINK TO THE PAST AS THE REAL SEQUEL"
> SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

The Legend Of Zelda launched in Japan alongside the Disk System in February 1986. Players were absorbed in Link's quest to rescue Princess Zelda and defeat the dark prince Ganon, and sales were strong, topping 1.7m – impressive, when you factor in that new hardware was required to play it. The Disk System was not released outside of Japan, so for its 1987 worldwide release Nintendo had to revert its approach and issue the game on cartridge. This required a large (for its time) 128KB ROM and an additional 8KB of battery-backed RAM to save progress. It proved to be a wise move as the game would sell a further 4.8m copies on cart.

While Western gamers were exploring Hyrule for the first time, in Japan the second instalment was already old news. Released in January 1987, *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* was turned around quickly, but this wasn't a simple rehash like the Japanese *Super Mario Bros 2*. Instead, Nintendo went back to the drawing board to create a new adventure that was more of a side-scrolling platformer with RPG elements. NPCs played a greater role in the game and Link could now earn experience points to upgrade his abilities. The sequel was another commercial hit, but its departure from the original (and what would follow) has led to it being known as the 'oddball' entry of the series.

Speaking about the game in a 1992 issue of *Famicom Tsushin*, Miyamoto, who moved to the producer role for the sequel, explained the reasoning behind the changes. "*The Adventure Of Link* was created with the premise that the player will grow and improve as they play. But there are also people who just aren't very good at the game, so we made it so that even those people can progress if they work hard and earn enough experience points. The good thing about RPGs is that even if you're not great at the game, you'll be rewarded if you put in the effort." A decade later, speaking to the Swedish *Super Play* magazine, he was more reflective – and less forgiving. "It was my original idea, but the actual game was developed by another team," he said, mitigating. "The games I make usually get better in the development process, since we keep coming up with good ideas, but *Zelda II* stayed the same. It was sort of a failure… We actually see *A Link To The Past* as the real sequel to *The Legend Of Zelda*. *Zelda II* was more of a side story about what happened to Link after the events of *The Legend Of Zelda*."

Let's follow Miyamoto's lead and move onto the third game, *A Link To The Past*, which was initially released for the Japanese Super Famicom in November 1991. Miyamoto retained his producer role while Takashi Tezuka, who co-designed the original alongside Miyamoto and wrote the story for the two previous entries, directed the new game. Speaking to this magazine in 2017, Tezuka remembers being excited by the prospect of bringing *Zelda* to Nintendo's new 16-bit console. "The hardware allowed us to do things we hadn't been able to until that point," he said. "I'd only been drawing four-colour pixel images up until then, so even just increasing the number of colours available to 16 or 256, as well as being able to use high-quality sounds, was really exciting." That said, the technical challenges remained. "We had a long battle with the memory size," he revealed, "and I remember very clearly that the engineering team worked extremely hard to optimise it."

The game would return to the top-down perspective of the original – a decision that was partly driven by the game's backstory, which saw Hyrule split into two parallel worlds which Link could flip between. "When we were starting the project, we experimented to see if it was possible to include a multi-world structure," he continued. "Our plan was that events in the hub world would have an effect on the other, overlapping worlds. In the end, we decided it would be best for us, as well as for players, to have this as two worlds: one light, one dark. We felt the best way to represent this overlap of light and dark, and to represent the changes between them, was to use the same slanted top-down view used in the original *The Legend Of Zelda* game."

> "WE EXPERIMENTED TO SEE IF IT WAS POSSIBLE TO INCLUDE A MULTI-WORLD STRUCTURE"
> TAKASHI TEZUKA

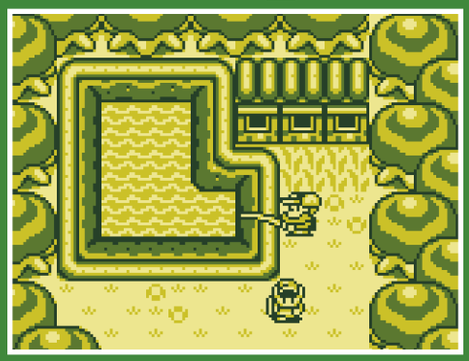
The third game placed more emphasis on the plot, and particularly Link's path to becoming the princess-saving, Ganon-conquering hero of Hyrule. "The game starts with a dark, rainy scene, with Link being just a regular village boy who, in the same situation as the player, doesn't really know what's going on," said Tezuka. "He just follows Princess Zelda's voice and works to save her. We didn't have Link start out as a sword-wielding hero, because we wanted him to awaken as a hero when he pulls out the Master Sword. We thought that players would form an emotional connection with Link as they play." For Miyamoto, however, his oft-repeated maxim of 'gameplay first, story second' still rang true. "The most important thing is how comfortable you feel when playing the game," he said in a 1992 interview with *The Super Famicom* magazine. "What determines that is not the scenario, but the controls, the sound, the rhythm. No matter how good the story is, if these aspects are neglected, it won't be a good game." He felt the same way about the visual enhancements offered by the new hardware. "I've never thought about it in terms of aesthetics alone. It's important to first create the images, words and sounds that are the things you want to express, and then have the attitude of finding something that elevates them further."

Miyamoto's design philosophy would reap results. *A Link To The Past* sold 4.6m copies worldwide, which was more than the second game (4.4m), but short of the original (6.5m). Sales aside, the game is celebrated by many fans as the pinnacle of the traditional 2D *Zelda* format. In that category it does have competition from a plucky outsider – *Link's Awakening*, the Game Boy entry which was released in 1993. While the GB could have conceivably handled a port of *A Link To The Past*, Miyamoto and Tezuka chose instead to create an exclusive adventure for the handheld. *Link's Awakening* truly was a side story, taking place away from Hyrule, on a mysterious island, with Zelda nowhere in sight. 1993 also saw the release of two offshoot entries, *The Faces Of Evil* and *The Wand Of Gamelon*, developed under license by Phillips for its CD-i hardware (more on those in **RG** 27). A third, *Zelda's Adventure*, followed in 1995. Many words have been used to describe these CD-i efforts, but 'misjudged' is the most apt.

Despite the Phillips deviation, the series remained a vital property for Nintendo, so

SIDE QUESTS

CELEBRATING THE HIGHLIGHTS OF LINK'S HANDHELD HERITAGE



LINK'S AWAKENING

1993 • GAME BOY

Link's first Game Boy adventure is a miniature marvel. Rather than the pared-back experience you might expect, it's a proper *Zelda* game that's delightful from start to finish. The difficulty level is slightly more forgiving, making it a perfect entry point for newcomers.

ORACLE OF SEASONS

2001 • GAME BOY COLOR

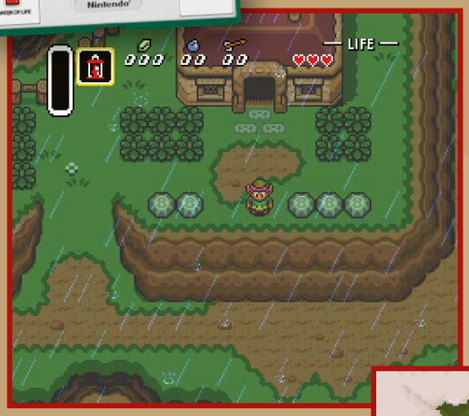
Developed by Flagship, and released consecutively with its 'twin' game *Oracle Of Ages*, this emulates the look and feel of *Link's Awakening* to excellent effect. Of the two games, *Seasons* is more cerebral, with a greater focus on puzzles over action, so it gets our vote.

THE MINISH CAP

2004 • GAME BOY ADVANCE

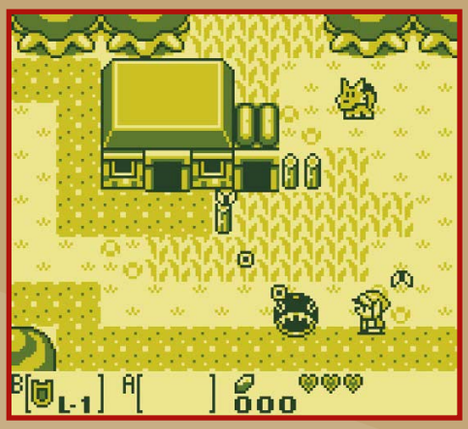
This entry looks great, using the GBA hardware to deliver visuals that channel *A Link To The Past*. Gameplay-wise it's another triumph, with the titular headwear that makes Link tiny leading to lots of clever puzzles. It's not the longest *Zelda*, but it's every bit as rewarding.

» Before his Game Boy adventures, Link made his portable debut in a Game & Watch LCD handheld, released in 1989.



» [SNES] *A Link To The Past* begins with an atmospheric prologue, where Link sets out to rescue Princess Zelda on a stormy night.

» [SNES] Step one. Sword acquired. We're sure you can hear the musical cue in your head right now.



» [Game Boy] A Chain Chomp makes a cameo appearance in *Link's Awakening*, linking *Zelda* to the *Mario* universe.

» [Game Boy Color] *Link's Awakening DX* features a new 'Color Dungeon' designed to show off the GBC's new hues.

PHANTOM HOURGLASS

2007 • NINTENDO DS

■ Built around the DS' touch-screen capabilities, this direct sequel to *The Wind Waker* uses the stylus to control Link's movements and actions. It could have been a mess, but it's perfectly intuitive and works brilliantly, adding a tactile new dimension to Link's exploits.

SPIRIT TRACKS

2009 • NINTENDO DS

■ The second DS game retains the stylus control system from *Phantom Hourglass*, resulting in a similar game. Yet the addition of the Spirit Train, a customisable choo-choo that Link uses to traverse the overworld, is another genius addition that gives the game a unique flavour.

A LINK BETWEEN WORLDS

2013 • NINTENDO 3DS

■ This is the direct follow-up to *A Link To The Past*. While it recalls the SNES game's setting and storyline, it looks forward with a less linear structure (you can choose the order in which you tackle the dungeons), granting the player more freedom in how they progress.

CARTOON QUEST

THAT TIME LINK AND ZELDA TURNED UP ON OUR TELLIES

When 2023's *The Super Mario Bros Movie* earned a sizeable $1.36b at the worldwide box office, it prompted Nintendo to chew over other potential film projects. A live-action *Zelda* movie was quickly greenlit and it's due out in 2027, directed by Wes Ball and starring Benjamin Evan Ainsworth as Link and Bo Bragason as Zelda.

This is not the first time the series has been adapted for the screen. Back in 1989, an animated *The Legend Of Zelda* segment was included as part of *The Super Mario Bros Super Show!*. A total of 13 episodes were produced, which drew inspiration from the two NES games. The plots were typical kids cartoon fare, but what's particularly interesting is the depiction of the main characters: Link is a rather annoying, reluctant hero, while Zelda is a very resourceful princess who's clearly capable of saving herself. The series has been released on various home media over the years, and these days it's possible to freely view every episode online. For *Zelda* fans it remains a fun watch – just avoid any drinking games linked to the number of times Links utters the terrible line, "Well, excuuuuse me, princess!"

» We're surprised Zelda hasn't thrown Link out of that window…

» The two Oracle games were released on the same day in 2001. They are separate adventures but it's possible to 'trade' items between the two games.

» [Game Boy Advance] In a neat touch, if you play either Oracle title on a GBA, a new 'Advance Shop' pops up, carrying exclusive items.

» [Game Boy Advance] If you complete the *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure, an exclusive new dungeon appears in the GBA version of *A Link To The Past*.

» [Nintendo 64] Horses were introduced to Hyrule in *Ocarina Of Time*, enabling you to travel around quickly with neigh problems.

» [Nintendo 64] In *Majora's Mask*, Termina Field acts as the game's central hub, serving the same purpose as Hyrule Field in *Ocarina*.

When the Nintendo 64 was released in 1996, it wasn't a case of if, but when a *Zelda* game would grace the new system. And 'when' soon became a hot topic. Miyamoto had previously mused on how it was taking longer and longer to develop *Zelda* games. The original took a year, *Link's Awakening* a year-and-a-half, and *A Link To The Past* two-and-a-half years. Link's N64 debut, *Ocarina Of Time*, would take more than three years. After high-profile delays it was eventually released in November 1998.

> "THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS HOW COMFORTABLE YOU FEEL WHEN PLAYING THE GAME. WHAT DETERMINES THAT IS NOT THE SCENARIO..."
> **SHIGERU MIYAMOTO**

In the official Japanese strategy guide for the game, Miyamoto spoke about the challenges of creating complex games requiring multiple development teams. "The hardware keeps changing over the years and consequently the overall work we have to do has blown up," he said, in an interview translated by shmuplations.com "My work was less about adding my own ideas as it was bringing together and consolidating what everyone else had done. Because a game this large is the combined work of a huge number of people, it's not my place to come in and try to exert my own control over everything." Explaining his approach in relation to adding new features to the *Zelda* formula, he said, "If you just port everything over from the previous game, you can't really create something new, right? The development staff has largely changed, too, and I wanted them to make the *Zelda* they wanted to make. The scenes with Epona were the result of long discussions with designer Yoshiaki Koizumi. The reason we chose a horse is because we wanted the mode of transportation to be something that brought you into contact with others. That choice is also a reflection of the staff's understanding of what '*Zelda*-ness' means."

Of course, the biggest shift in *Ocarina Of Time* was the move to 3D graphics – a change that affected not just the look of the game, but how combat and exploration worked. It meant changes to those famous dungeons too. "For the first time in a *Zelda* game we didn't spend as much time on the dungeons. It may be because we were working from completely new ideas this time. The dungeons are not further iterations on the 'labyrinth' ideas from *A Link To The Past*. I don't think those are very appropriate for a 3D game." And then there was the game's approach to jumping – that bane of many early 3D adventures. "I thought if we added jumping, it would be one-too-many gameplay elements. And it would be frustrating if you were in the middle of a dungeon and had to make some pixel-perfect jump to progress." The solution was to introduce a system where Link automatically jumps at the edge of platforms. Cutscenes were another consideration and Miyamoto looked to limit them, using the in-game camera to add "miniature movies" instead. "When Link approaches a cliff's edge, the camera swivels upwards and allows you to peer down into the chasm," he said. "Or when you cross a bridge on horseback, the camera switches to a cinematic side view.

» [Nintendo DS] Rather than just use the DS hardware to show your map on the second screen, Nintendo designed *Phantom Hourglass* around a stylus control system.

LINK UNLEASHED

RELIVE THOSE KEY MOMENTS WHEN THE GAMEWORLD SUDDENLY OPENED UP

UNLOCKING THE DARK WORLD

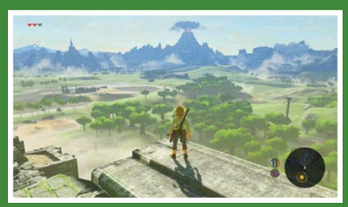
After a few hours of play in *A Link To The Past*, you'll battle the evil wizard Agahnim who will draw you into the Dark World, a gloomy version of the Sacred Realm. With Link standing atop the Pyramid Of Power at the world's centre (with Death Mountain looming in the background), you suddenly realise that this quest is much bigger than you first thought.

ENTERING HYRULE FIELD

It's perhaps the quintessential moment in the *Zelda* series. Having finally escaped the confines of *Ocarina Of Time*'s Kokiri Forest, young Link is allowed to roam Hyrule Field for the first time. Suddenly, this vast overworld appears, with wide open plains spreading out before you. The door to the rest of the game is opened and the impact is unforgettable.

EXPLORING THE GREAT SEA

Zelda games like to limit your exploration at the onset, and *The Wind Waker* does this more than most. But once you reach Windfall Island you can purchase the Sail from Zunari's shop. With this item, you can begin to explore The Great Sea properly and enjoy an island-hopping tour. Initially, however, you will need to factor in the wind direction.



LEAVING THE GREAT PLATEAU

Breath Of The Wild begins on The Great Plateau, a raised region that's initially secluded from the rest of the map. To leave, you first must acquire the Paraglider from the mysterious Old Man and use it to drift down to the region below. From here, the true adventure begins, with the sweeping expanse of Hyrule unfurling in every direction.

In this way, we're not interrupting the gameplay with lengthy cutscenes, but attaching the movies to the character's own movements."

Ocarina Of Time was late but worth the wait. The delay only served to build anticipation and players were not disappointed – it was another series high point, a genuine masterpiece. Sales were the best yet too, hitting 7.6m. Capitalising on its success – and the 3D engine it had built – Nintendo rushed ahead with a direct sequel, *Majora's Mask*. The game was directed by Eiji Aonuma and Yoshiaki Koizumi, two of the *Ocarina Of Time* designers. Aonuma, speaking to former Nintendo president Satoru Iwata for an Iwata Asks interview, revealed the story behind *Majora's Mask* and its unusual gameplay, which was based around a repeating three-day cycle. "This all started with Miyamoto-san asking whether we could make a game in one year if we repurposed the 3D models from *Ocarina Of Time*," he revealed. "I started thinking about what kind of game I should make. I met Koizumi-san around this time and I asked for his help. He was working on a plan for a different game, one where you would play the same moments in time over and over again. From there, the 'three-day system' was born." Wearing masks to transform Link was also integral to the game. "The development of *Ocarina Of Time* was so long, we were able to put in a whole lot of different elements. Out of those, there were ideas that weren't used to their full potential. One of those was the mask salesman. We felt it would be a lot of fun if Link acquired all these abilities by putting on different masks. We felt that would expand the gameplay. Once we decided we were going with the masks, everything just fell into place. Well, we really didn't have time, so things had to fall in place [laughs]."

> "WE UPENDED A LOT OF THINGS WITH THE WIND WAKER, AND WE CONTINUED TO DO SO BEYOND THAT"
> EIJI AONUMA

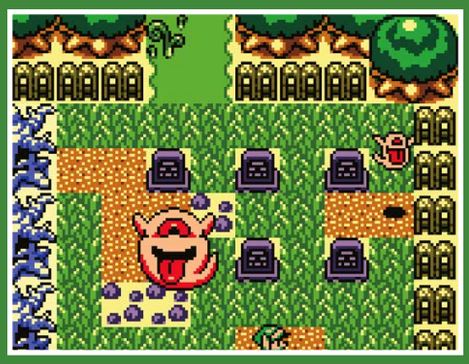
***Majora's Mask* was released in 2000, at the beginning of the decade that would see the *Zelda* release timeline become very busy.** There were three separate strands: the exclusive handheld titles (which you can read about in our Side Quests panel); the multiplayer spin-offs, released under the *Four Swords* banner; and the enduring mainline entries, beginning with *The Wind Waker* in 2002. This GameCube game, which saw Link navigating an ocean overworld, featured cel-shaded graphics and introduced the world to 'Toon Link'. This new look proved to be rather controversial at the time. "There was division between those who liked that artistic style and those who didn't," Aonuma told Iwata. "We upended a lot of things with *The Wind Waker*, and we continued to do so beyond that. *Twilight Princess* [2006] had serious and photorealistic looks, and then *Skyward Sword* [2011] had a painting-like look with its half cel-shaded animation. It keeps changing with each new release…"

» *Ocarina Of Time* was a huge hit on the Nintendo 3DS, selling almost as many copies as the Nintendo 64 original.

The truth is the 'look' has always evolved, just as the plot has repeatedly reset and Link, Zelda, Ganon and the other characters have continually changed over time (Miyamoto confirmed this back in 1994, stating that, "Each character is recreated for every new game.") The style of game is also fluid. With the release of *A Link Between Worlds* (2013), and to a greater extent *Breath Of The Wild* (2017), the series has become less linear with an emphasis on open-world exploration. Its 2D roots are not ignored either – see the remake of *Link's Awakening* (2019) and the more recent *Echoes Of Wisdom* (2024). With Aonuma's steady hand on the tiller as series producer, and both Miyamoto and Tezuka retaining creative interest, we can be sure that one thing won't change: *The Legend Of Zelda* will always inspire warmth and a sense of wonder in everyone who steps into its world. ✱

POLISHING PERFECTION

ROUNDING UP THE VERY BEST REMASTERS



LINK'S AWAKENING DX

■ The 1993 original worked perfectly within the limits of the Game Boy hardware. With the arrival of the Game Boy Color in 1998, Nintendo chose to remaster the game, adding colour graphics and bringing the visuals to life. A brand-new 'Color Dungeon' was also added.

OCARINA OF TIME 3D

■ This is how you improve on perfection. The 3DS version sharpens up the graphics (and presents them in 3D, naturally), and makes the controls more responsive. A myriad of small tweaks (such as simplifying the use of the Iron Boots) seal the deal on this brilliant update.

THE WIND WAKER HD

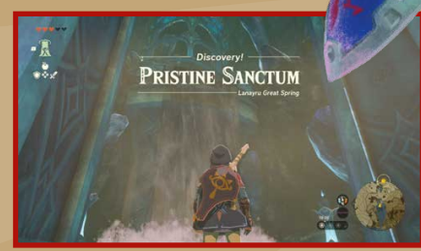
■ The game looks amazing displayed in HD, and the Wii U's GamePad acts as a handy map/inventory screen. But the main improvement is the new Swift Sail, which makes travel across the ocean faster and less fussy. There are other gameplay fixes but this is key.

» [Wii U] 'Toon Link' made his debut in *The Wind Waker*. It was a rather divisive design decision at the time. You can read more about the game's creation in **RG** 121.

» [Wii] The original 2011 release of *Skyward Sword* makes extensive use of the Wii's motion controls.

[GameCube] Yes! Link gets to transform into wolf form in 2006's GameCube/Wii dual release *Twilight Princess*.

» [Switch 2] *Breath Of The Wild* is such a fine-looking game. Every vista is screenshot worthy.



» [Switch 2] Exploring Hyrule and discovering its numerous secret areas is one of the many joys of *Tears Of The Kingdom*.

SWITCH 2 EDITION

TWILIGHT PRINCESS HD

■ Debate continues as to whether *Twilight Princess* was best on the GameCube or Wii – but these days it has to be the Wii U version every time, thanks to the 1080p visuals, various quality-of-life improvements, and the new Hero Mode designed for seasoned players.

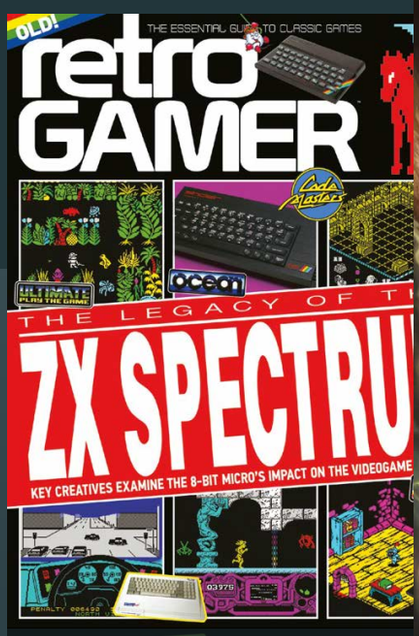
SKYWARD SWORD HD

■ This one's an easy choice. *Skyward Sword* was built around the Wii's motion controls, making it a bit of a Marmite entry. The Switch version lets you play it using a standard controller, making it more accessible. Gyro fans can still faff with their Joy-Cons if they wish.

TEARS OF THE KINGDOM

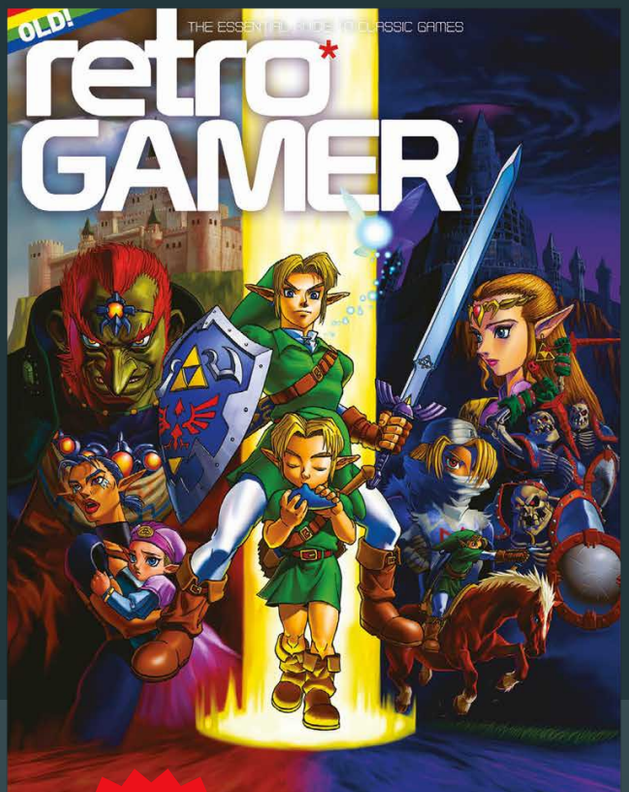
■ The fact this demanding game runs on the Switch as well as it does is an achievement, but performance regularly dips below the 30fps target. On the Switch 2 it maintains a steady 60fps and also introduces HDR and faster loading times. The end result is simply glorious.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
AND ENJOY GREAT SAVINGS!



SUBSCRIBE ONLINE NOW AT
www.magazinesdirect.com/RET/DN22P
TELEPHONE 0330 333 1113 AND QUOTE DN22P

TERMS & CONDITIONS Offer closes **30th September 2026**. Price is guaranteed for the first 6 months, please allow up to 6 weeks for the delivery of your first subscription issue (up to 8 weeks overseas) the subscription rate includes postage and packaging.*Savings are based on the cover price. Payment is non-refundable after the 14-day cancellation period. **Access to the digital library will end with your subscription. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries and overseas rates please call: +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time (excluding Bank Holidays) or email: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle. If you are an active subscriber, you have instant access to back issues through your iOS or Android devices. Your digital magazine entitlement is available at no additional cost and no further action is required. Pocketmags library may not have access to the full archive of digital back issues.
** Access to the digital library will end with your subscription.



OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
40 YEARS OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS
THE MAKING OF SPIDER-MAN 2

Exclusive ***Subscriber Cover*** *Every Issue!*

Reasons to subscribe...

- **NEW!** Full digital access to 80+ back issues when you subscribe to print!**
- You'll never miss an issue!
- It's delivered direct to your door
- Brilliant value – save money on the cover price

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

PRINT + DIGITAL ACCESS

£27.99
EVERY 6 MONTHS

SAVE **28%***

DIGITAL EDITION

£21.99
EVERY 6 MONTHS

SAVE **40%***

To purchase single back issues (print format only) visit: **magazinesdirect.com** (click on 'Single issues' tab)
Or you can email: **help@magazinesdirect.com** For further help call: **+44(0)330 333 1113** Lines are open Mon-Fri 8.30am-7pm and Sat 10am-3pm UK time. Magazinesdirect.com is owned and operated by Future Publishing Limited.
Full subscription prices: £70.20 for UK, €155 for Europe, $176 for US, £135 for Rest of World.

GHOULS 'N

FROM THE TITLE SCREEN THROUGH TO STAGES TWO, FIVE AND BEYOND, THERE IS NO DOUBTING THE IMPACT TIM FOLLIN'S INTRICATE AND AMBITIOUS SCORE HAD ON PLAYERS OF THE HOME-COMPUTER VERSIONS OF THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED GHOULS 'N GHOSTS

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

IN THE KNOW

- **» DEVELOPER:** SOFTWARE CREATIONS
- **» COMPOSER:** TIM FOLLIN
- **» BEST TRACK:** TITLE MUSIC
- **» RELEASE:** 1989
- **» PLATFORM:** COMMODORE 64,VARIOUS
- **» GENRE:** PLATFORMER

Capcom's *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* was a frighteningly good platform game. It made its debut in the arcades in 1988 as the follow-up to *Ghosts 'N Goblins* and it quickly caught the imagination of gamers, paving the way for an inevitable slew of home-computer versions that were, in the main, also positively received.

The game's combination of challenging gameplay and gorgeous graphics proved captivating enough but there was a special treat for anyone who played it on the Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum (128K), Amstrad CPC 6128, Atari ST and Amiga. These versions had a blistering soundtrack by Tim Follin who many have argued to be the greatest ever composer of videogame music.

That's quite a pedestal on which to be placed but Tim's tunes certainly struck a chord, particularly with *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* on the Commodore 64 and the 16-bits. What makes the soundtrack even more remarkable is that it was composed when Tim was just 18 years old. Working for Software Creations, he not only improved upon the work of Tamayo Kawamoto, who composed the arcade version's audio, but came up with a set of original tunes, unleashing a gothic symphony.

"I'd always had an interest in music," he says. "My older brothers had various instruments, my grandad was an amateur singer and we had a piano in the house, which my grandmother had saved up for because she also played so I grew up hearing a lot of music." Tim's first instrument was a Yamaha CS-01 monophonic synth which allowed him to experiment with pulse-width modulated (PWM) square waves. A few years later, aged around 14, he got a ZX Spectrum. "I began experimenting with machine code programming and immediately gravitated towards creating sound," he says, explaining he learned to create multiple channels and began writing tunes "just as a way to show what the code could do".

Around that time, his older brother Mike was writing games and Tim assisted with the audio. After Mike developed a Spectrum version of the BBC Micro title *The Sentinel* and asked Tim to copy the four-channel sound, employment beckoned. "Mike landed a full-time job at Software Creations and the boss asked me to work there too," Tim says. "That was my introduction to all the other computers and consoles and the other programmers explained how the various sound chips worked. I soon

» [C64] Of the original tunes Tim wrote for the game, his favourite was the high-score screen tune, mainly for the key change towards the end.

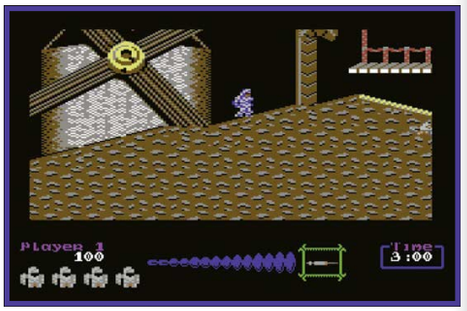
Tim Follin began his career working for Insight Studios and he followed his brother, Mike, into full-time employment at Software Creations. He left to join Malibu Interactive, later became a freelancer, had a spell out of the videogame industry and more recently worked on the FMV-focussed titles *Contradiction* and *At Dead Of Night*.

» [C64] Tim says it's "difficult to be proud of tunes that were only really half my creation" but he did an amazing job.

» [Amiga] The Amiga included a different title tune but otherwise it included converted C64 tunes.

GHOSTS

» [C64] Different tunes accompanied each of the different stages and all were appropriate to the gameplay.



» [C64] Tim's haunting soundtrack has been performed by symphony orchestras.

stopped coding my own music drivers and let the much better programmers there do it for me, so I could concentrate on writing the music."

Tim had been a fan of *Ghosts 'N Goblins* and he used to play it in the arcade on his way home from school so, when Software Creations asked him to compose audio for the sequel, he was more than happy to get involved. He didn't really get any direction. "I was familiar with the sequel and the mood it was going for but the music was just left to me," he says. "I think music was seen as a sort of bit of extra gloss on top, rather than being integral to the game." Even so, Tim ended up pulling a blinder.

Work began on the C64 version first, starting with conversions of the arcade tunes. "I thought they were great, but they were all quite short and needed to be longer for the C64, so I embellished them and often took them in a new direction." He then turned his attention to the original compositions, notably the amazing title tune. "The inspiration for this came from listening to Black Sabbath on the commute into Manchester from my home town in St Helens," he says. "If you listen to that first album you'll hear where I got the inspiration from!"

Tim was starting to get into acoustic folk/rock at the time and he thought a more woody, flutey sound would suit the game. He also looked at what was technically possible and ran with it. "It is really just the same as someone overdriving their guitar and then wondering what sort of music makes the most of that sound (that is, all of rock music)," he says. Yet many of the main theme's flourishes were born from boredom. "I used to get bored very easily with the music I wrote and I used to make it evolve and change quite quickly," he admits. "I think the overall effect of constantly changing the tricks I was using made this theme sound busier and bigger."

One thing's for sure, Tim enjoyed working on the C64. "It was obviously a very simple synth but it was still flexible enough to allow me to create some interesting sounds," he says. He also felt he could experiment on the Amiga which allowed him to produce a different title tune. He made a great job of all of the versions he worked on and says *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* was the project he was most invested in. "It aligned with some of my music interests outside of videogame music at the time and I felt it was more atmospheric than anything else I did on the C64," he tells us. But he won't take full credit for the work. "A lot of it was due to those brilliant original arcade tunes by Tamayo Kawamoto," he says. "I felt, and still feel, like I was riding on the coat tails of a better composer and I see this work more as a technical achievement than a compositional one." ✱

> "I BEGAN EXPERIMENTING WITH MACHINE CODE PROGRAMMING AND IMMEDIATELY GRAVITATED TOWARDS CREATING SOUND"
> TIM FOLLIN

FROM SID TO SNES

Tim Follin highlights some of his favourite systems for making music

■ Tim Follin has composed audio using many different computers but he certainly had his favourites. In terms of the 8-bits, he enjoyed working on the Commodore 64 the most, and he was frustrated with some of its rival machines. "I hated the AY-8910 chip found in the later Spectrum and Amstrad CPC," he admits. "It was so annoying that so many computers used that chip which was already dated at that time."

For this reason, he didn't like working on the Atari ST either, preferring the Amiga which he says was always full of promise. "But I was never given enough sample memory to make the most of it and I was never happy with what I was able to do with it," he adds.

Tim seemed to get on better with the consoles. "The NES was probably my next favourite after the C64 because it was a simple chip but again just about flexible enough to achieve some interesting sounds. The SNES was my favourite sample-based chip to work on. It offered a lot of flexibility despite its small sample memory size. I've always loved a challenge!"

» [Atari ST] Although Tim didn't like the AY-8910 sound chip, he still achieved great things with the Atari ST.

» [C64] *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* is among Tim's best work on the Commodore 64.

THE MAKING OF

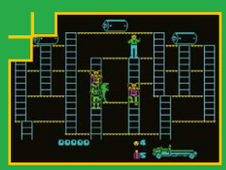
MATCH DAY II

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN SOFTWARE
- **DEVELOPER:** JON RITMAN, BERNIE DRUMMOND, GUY STEVENS
- **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM, MSX, AMSTRAD CPC & PCW, C64
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** SPORTS

RELEASED IN 1984, OCEAN SOFTWARE'S MATCH DAY REVOLUTIONISED FOOTBALL GAMING, PARTICULARLY ON THE ZX SPECTRUM. RETRO GAMER CAUGHT UP WITH CREATOR JON RITMAN TO CHAT ABOUT ITS SUPERIOR SEQUEL

WORDS BY GRAEME MASON

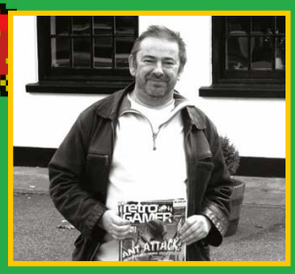


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BEAR BOVVER (PICTURED)
PLATFORM: C64, ZX SPECTRUM
RELEASED: 1983

MATCH DAY
PLATFORM: AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM, C64, BBC MICRO
RELEASED: 1984

HEAD OVER HEELS
PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM, VARIOUS
RELEASED: 1987



» Jon Ritman is the creator of the *Match Day* series and released a number of isometric 8-bit hits including *Head Over Heels* and *Batman*.

Despite missing out on *Crash* magazine's Smash accolade (something developer Jon Ritman never let it forget), *Match Day* became a perennial favourite everywhere thanks to its innate simplicity and accessibility. Yet it was far from perfect. Its player sprites, scrounged from Jon's earlier game, *Bear Bovver*, were functional at best, and there was little variety in the gameplay. "Obviously, there were all sorts of things that could have been better," says Jon as we begin our latest conversation with the veteran developer. "Such as the way the ball bounced off the players and the graphics themselves. I did the art for my early games, and I wasn't the best in that department."

International Match Day, released to help promote the new 128K ZX Spectrum, arrived two years later, but did nothing to address Jon's issues. "There was very little added – the new Spectrum was being launched in Spain and [Sinclair] wanted it for that. We jazzed up the sound, put in the intro, and that was literally it. The gameplay was identical." Meanwhile, Ultimate's *Knight Lore* had turned Jon's head – as it had so many other developers – helping him create his isometric masterpieces, *Batman* and *Head Over Heels*. But Jon never forgot about his football game. "*Match Day* had been very

IT'S A FUNNY OLD GAME

RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT THE MAIN VERSIONS OF MATCH DAY II

ZX SPECTRUM

■ With its *Crash* Smash (finally!) and *Your Sinclair* Game Of The Month awards, *Match Day II* arrived to great acclaim on the Spectrum in early 1988. Featuring all the playability of *Match Day*, plus a host more gameplay options, for most Spectrum owners, this was the pinnacle of football on the Sinclair computer.

AMSTRAD CPC

■ Converted by Jon Ritman himself, the Amstrad game replicates every facet of the Spectrum game, albeit with a touch more colour and sound. As such, there's little innovation, and while colourful, it's hardly vibrant. A decent footie game, but still too lethargic for many fans of the sport.

COMMODORE 64

■ As with the other versions, the pace of C64 *Match Day II* divided gamers and critics. Some fans enjoyed the slower, more tactical play, while it lacked the frenetic play demanded by arcade devotees. Inevitably compared to *International Soccer*, *Match Day II*'s improved computer players helped secure it Sizzler status in *Zzap!64* magazine.

MSX

■ Another impressive version of Jon Ritman's finest 8-bit footie hour, and the best soccer game on the MSX. Some graphical flicker aside, everything works smoothly, and the computer plays a notably tougher game, even on the lowest setting. The goalkeepers are still a bit rubbish, though.

successful," he notes, "but I thought I could do something a lot better. Ocean never asked – I decided to do it myself."

Between *Match Day* and the start of *Match Day II*, Jon Ritman's development methods had changed significantly. First up, he now had an artist partner, Bernie Drummond. "[Bernie] was always drawing, any time he got a spare moment," grins Jon. "He'd always be doodling, and he was such a natural. Once we started working together, it was the way to go." Secondly, Jon was now using a CP/M business machine, connected to the other computers for his game development. "Everything was on floppy disks and much faster. I could go from one machine to the other in a matter of seconds."

> "FOR ME, A FOOTBALL GAME SHOULD BE ABOUT PLAYABILITY"
> JON RITMAN

The scene was set for another *Match Day* game, but it almost didn't happen – at least, not at the famous Manchester software house. "I received an offer from Ocean," remembers Jon, "but then John Cook [of rival Mirrorsoft] contacted me and made me a better offer." Jon dutifully returned to Ocean with the news, which matched the offer. "But they said they weren't going to go backwards and forwards – that was it." As with his previous arrangements, Jon was freelance, taking an upfront advance on expected royalties, before beginning to earn once the game sold a set number of copies. Aware that Ocean was a good partner and better at marketing, and mindful of the risks of jumping ship to another publisher, Jon accepted its offer, and *Match Day II* was go.

Top of Jon's list for improvement was *Match Day*'s rudimentary passing and deflection systems. "It was very basic," notes Jon on the latter. "If the ball hit a player, it simply bounced back in the direction it came from. In *Match Day II*, the game treats the player as a cube that rotates as the player turns. From the angle of play, it either looks like a square or a diamond, and I calculated the deflections based on that." Thus, the Diamond Deflection technique emerged, significantly expanding the game's scope. Players could now accurately deflect the ball into the path of colleagues, stop it in the air before collecting it on the ground and, more importantly, divert it towards goal. Continues Jon, "It also took into account the player's movement, slowing or speeding up the ball depending on whether you were running in the direction the ball was travelling, or away from it."

The difference was monumental: now, fans could employ one-touch football, dabbing the ball into spaces for other players or themselves to run onto. "It's a simplified system, nothing like today's physics-based systems – but way better than in the original," says Jon. "But it gave the user a chance to gain another skill in ▶

» [ZX Spectrum] For that authentic Eighties winter look, *Match Day II* includes this headache-inducing white pitch.

» [ZX Spectrum] *Match Day II*'s tactics menu is from the Mike Bassett school of football.

» [MSX] With the clock ticking down, non-league Chelmsford City are leading Premier League Arsenal. Can they hold on?

» [MSX] The corner comes in – who's going to get on the end of it?

» [ZX Spectrum] The Portsmouth striker bears down on goal during the first half of this south coast derby.

manipulating the ball. If you controlled it, you might not be able to get past the opposition player – but if you pull back, wait for it to bounce, then run in the direction of the ball and knock it forward, the other player wouldn't be able to catch it. Like in real football, you use your body."

In the original *Match Day*, the footballers had two types of kick – ground and air, both hit at the same speed and strength, no matter what you pressed. Aware that the majority of players used a joystick rather than a keyboard and that he needed to improve the kicks, Jon devised *Match Day II*'s Kickometer, a constantly shifting bar at the top of the screen. Depending on the settings decided before kick-off, this rapidly spiked between three differing strengths of forward kick and a back-heel. When added to *Match Day*'s two styles – ground pass when stationary, lofted pass when moving – it again gave fans significantly more varied options, whether in attack or defence. Mix in a fast and low first-time pass (also three different strengths), plus a volley and players had notably more options for pinging the ball around. Recalls Jon, "I wanted to have a greater variety of kicks – but it had to be controllable with one button, as most joysticks only had the one. And even if they had two, they usually did the same thing!" Like much of *Match Day II*, the Kickometer is customisable in the front end. "The back-heel option didn't really work," he

BACK OF THE NET

BECOME A FOOTBALLING SUPERSTAR WITH THESE HANDY HINTS

GOLDEN GOAL

■ Try to position your attacker at the middle of the lower half of the 18-yard box, as in the picture. From here, aim a full-strength lofted pass goalwards. The computer goalie is caught in the lower section of its goal and, if you place it right, will be unable to save the shot.

TRACK YOUR RUNNERS

■ As in real football, it's important to keep an eye on where the opposition players without the ball are heading. Anticipate which pass the computer can make, and also prepare to know which of your own players is likely to be called into action.

STAY GOALSIDE

■ A key part of defending. Whenever an attacker enters the penalty area with the ball, try to ensure your defender stays between them and the goal, forcing them to either concede possession or pass backwards.

adds, "which is why you could disable it, and change the other kicks. The player decided how they wanted it to work."

As Jon tinkered away with the game's engine, Bernie Drummond worked on *Match Day II*'s graphics. Ever the perfectionist, Bernie spent many long nights perfecting the game's players, just as he had with *Batman* and the symbiotic stars of *Head Over Heels*. The result wasn't, erm, the most athletic of footballers. "It's difficult when you've got so few pixels to work with," laughs Jon, "and you've got to try and make it work with the actual game motion. Bernie would bring the graphics to me, and I'd say, 'That's rubbish' or, 'Great.' He'd take my word for it and move on. For *Match Day II*, what he came up with seemed to work in the game, and I was happy with it at the time."

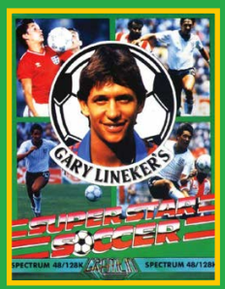
Like the rest of the players, the goalkeepers got a visual overhaul – but remained as generally static as in the previous game. As in *Match Day*, Jon admits they were "a bit crap", steadfastly refusing to move from the goal line, take goal kicks, or indeed interact in any meaningful way apart from the odd save and tip-over. Did he try to improve the custodians between the sticks? "It's not easy to fit in the code and graphics, especially in the space on the Spectrum. It would also have been time-consuming to come up with the code to handle a good goalkeeper, running around the area and taking goal kicks. In the end, I just accepted that the goalies were blocking players rather than active ones." Also absent are tackling and fouls, and therefore free kicks, offside and penalty shoot-outs. "I added stuff until the memory was full. It just wasn't feasible to get it all in," grimaces Jon, and **Retro Gamer** takes its cue to move on.

> "IT'S A SIMPLIFIED SYSTEM, NOTHING LIKE TODAY'S PHYSICS-BASED SYSTEMS"
> JON RITMAN

As in *Match Day*, the computer controls one side completely in a versus computer game, while the player controls one player, with a piece of code deciding which of the other footballers is transferred to them when they pass the ball. *Match Day II*'s difficulty levels – changed from Amateur, Professional and International to Low, Medium and High – refined the principles and artificial intelligence behind the computer's ability. "It's funny to think of it being called AI," smiles Jon. "I remember thinking, for the lowest difficulty level, I'm just going to whack this guy on the head so he's stunned a bit and doesn't react as quickly! The hardest level was essentially just everything working as it should do, while I did a lot of work on the positional play, all the theoretical places that all the players you weren't controlling were trying to get ▶

» [Amstrad CPC] Soccerama goes on the attack, but it's too little, too late.

» [Amstrad CPC] Tussling in the box as Ritman Utd prepare for a corner.



» This licensed footie game from Gremlin appeared at the same time as *Match Day II*. Look at the picture in the bottom right. Seem familiar?

Hotline Top 20
1 (>) MATCH DAY II OCEAN
2 (5) RENEGADE IMAGINE
3 (1) EXOLON HEWSON
4 (4) ENDURO RACER ACTIVISION
5 (3) GAUNTLET IMAGINE
6 (2) ZYNAPS HEWSON
7 (6) HEAD OVER HEELS OCEAN
8 (-) COMMANDO ELITE
9 (7) MATCH DAY OCEAN
10 (>) OUT RUN US GOLD
11 (12) ELITE FIREBIRD
12 (9) STARGLIDER RAINBIRD
13 (14) PAPERBOY ELITE
14 (11) COBRA OCEAN
15 (8) BUBBLE BOBBLE FIREBIRD
16 (10) MERCENARY NOVAGEN
17 (18) QUAZATRON HEWSON
18 (>) DRILLER INCENTIVE
19 (15) BARBARIAN PALACE
20 (>) THUNDERCATS ELITE

» Jon Ritman's finest hour: *Match Day II* in at number one in the Crash chart, while two of his earlier games lurk in the top ten.

PUT IT ON A PLATE

■ Earned a corner? Here's how to score nearly every time. If he's there, boot it to your player lurking at the far post. Hold off the defender, wait for the ball to drop and use your body or head to nudge it over the line.

QUICK COUNTERATTACK

■ Players can be pulled out of position, allowing for quick counterattacks. Learn how to use the super-quick first-time pass and Diamond Deflection to get the ball upfield quickly and take advantage of those gaps.

BUILD FROM THE BACK

■ Avoid booting the ball upfield at goalkicks, as you can't see clearly where it'll land, which usually results in lost possession. It's a better tactic to pass to a nearby defender and work the ball into midfield, but be careful not to get caught in possession.

» [ZX Spectrum] Chelmsford City kick off against the might of RG Utd.

» [Amstrad CPC] With no penalties, this match heads into extra time.

» [Amstrad CPC] Horns are locked between Ritman Utd and Bombay Mix as the teams ready for the second half.

» [C64] *Match Day II* features many goalmouth scrambles.

» [Amstrad CPC] Soccerama opens the scoring.

» [ZX Spectrum] Jon Ritman's commitment to customisation meant you can play in this weird colour scheme, should you desire.

» [C64] It's an Arsenal throw-in with the North London derby locked one-one.

» [ZX Spectrum] *Match Day II* offers a wealth of options.

» [ZX Spectrum] A rousing cup run for RG Utd ends in glory.

to, depending on who had the ball and whereabouts on the pitch the ball was."

While many of *Match Day II*'s options are similar to its forebear – such as the three computer skill levels, the ability to change team names and the length of each half (although the choice of playing a full 90-minute game is gone, with the maximum a more sensible 15 minutes) – the front end was radically redesigned from Chris Clarke's original, echoing Jon's games in the meantime. "That was all a bit of a fiasco, so after *Match Day*, I decided to do it all myself in the future. So the front ends for *Batman*, *Head Over Heels* and *Match Day II* were all based around the same code, which took up far less room in the computer."

Additionally, Jon introduced a new twin-player mode alongside the existing two-player option, though both modes presented issues for non-joystick users. "[The twin-player option] was an obvious thing to do as I wanted to give another way to play and whatever flexibility I could. But the Spectrum's matrix keyboard gave you problems, as it sometimes couldn't detect which key was pressed or would choose one over another when more than one key was pressed at once. Not much I could do about it – get some joysticks, guys!"

While curiously absent from most magazine reviews, *Match Day II*'s ponderous speed remains its one source of criticism today. Presumably, Jon tried to optimise it as much as possible? "Hey, it was as fast as I could get it!" he grins. "I spent ages staring at the inner loops that drove it, trying to shave a t-state off [a unit of operation within the microprocessor]. If you've got something that's happening thousands of times a second, even if you can shave off one, that makes a significant difference to the game's speed. The drawing of the pitch and the players was the main problem, and I optimised those to hell and back. I doubt I could have got them any faster."

Match Day II debuted early in 1988, with Jon himself handling the Z80 versions. "I'm not entirely sure, but I might have done them simultaneously. I remember there were differences for the MSX, because I actually had to use sprites, and there was a limited number, in particular with having too many on the same horizontal line."

> "IN THE END, I JUST ACCEPTED THAT THE GOALIES WERE BLOCKING PLAYERS" JON RITMAN

Meanwhile, Ocean's John Darnell coded the C64 game, a line-by-line conversion of Z80 *Match Day II*. Remembers Jon, "Any time something didn't work, he'd get on the phone, and we would step through the code, Z80 my end, 6502 his, to see at which point they went different ways and where the problem was occurring."

As Jon expected, Ocean's supreme marketing skills ensured *Match Day II* became a big hit, helped by another skilled Bob Wakelin cover. "Look at the guy in yellow on the left – that's Gary Lineker!" laughs Jon. Under intense time pressure, Wakelin often looked to existing images for inspiration. Unfortunately, on this occasion, that very picture, of a youthful Lineker athletically volleying the ball, appeared on the front cover of Gremlin's official *Gary Lineker* game, *Gary Lineker's Super Star Soccer*, released the same month as *Match Day II*. "We were lucky shit didn't happen over that," ponders Jon. Unusually for a 'mere' developer, Jon's name also appears above the game title. "I think [Ocean] saw it as good advertising," he muses.

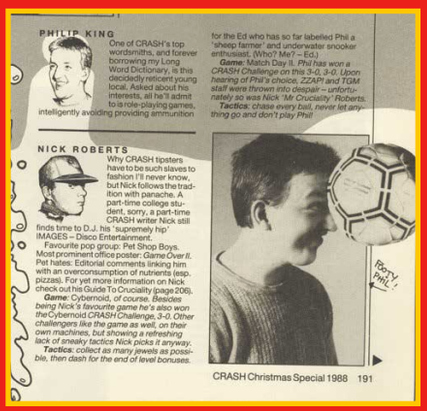
It worked, with *Match Day II* following the success of its forebear. "My favourite moment was in *Crash* magazine," remembers Jon. "It had this reader chart, and when *Match Day II* came out, it went straight to number one, and I also had two more places in the top ten." But does he have any regrets? "*Match Day II* was a much better game [than *Match Day*], but three years too late – I could have done it better straight away, but I'd seen *Knight Lore*, which opened my eyes as to what the Spectrum could do."

Jon soon began working for the Stamper brothers at Rare, shifting to console development and thus making *Match Day II* his ZX Spectrum swan song. But it wouldn't be the last we'd see of his most-famous series. "For me, a football game should be about playability," he notes, as our chat heads into injury time. "You know, passing into space, and running onto the ball. Easy to get to grips with. Just a good, simple, football game." ✱

THE KING OF THE GAME

RETRO GAMER CHATS TO CRASH MAGAZINE'S CHAMPION MATCH DAY II PLAYER, PHIL KING

■ Issue 59 of *Crash* saw the second of its inter-magazine challenges, with journalists from the new multiformat magazine *The Games Machine* pitched against *Zzap!64* and *Crash* writers. Each participant chose their own game, and *Crash*'s Phil King didn't need to think twice. "I absolutely loved [*Match Day II*] at the time," recalls Phil, "and remember thinking how much of an improvement it was over the original *Match Day*." Hugely familiar with *Match Day II*'s mechanics and having already triumphed in an earlier *Crash* challenge, Phil was well positioned to hand out some thrashings to the other mags. "I particularly loved the Kickometer and Diamond Deflection system – good for headers. It's really quite skillful once you get the hang of it." Phil's silky skills duly saw him triumph in *Match Day II*. "Football was always my thing. I loved the *Kick Off* games on the Amiga, then *Sensible Soccer*. I won the inaugural journo World Cup tournament for that." Scores on the doors: Phil' Maradona' King beat *Zzap!*'s Gordon Houghton 6-0, and *The Games Machine*'s Robins Candy and Hogg 2-0 and 4-0 respectively. But it wasn't enough to prevent the *Crash* man from finishing last. "I think I just wasn't very good at the other games," he laments.



Warbirds

STEALING A WIN

» ATARI LYNX » 1991 » ATARI CORPORATION

One of the biggest challenges as a Lynx owner was simply finding other Lynx owners. I longed to play my many multiplayer games with others, but it never happened.

That changed when I met Bob (not his name, but let's go with it). Bob was a friend of a friend who played *D&D* occasionally and he was known as being a little 'shifty'. He was always the first to pull out a spliff during a *D&D* session and would often tell some outrageous story that started off with, "You'll never guess who got in trouble with the police the other day." Needless to say, if there was any sort of drama, Bob knew about it.

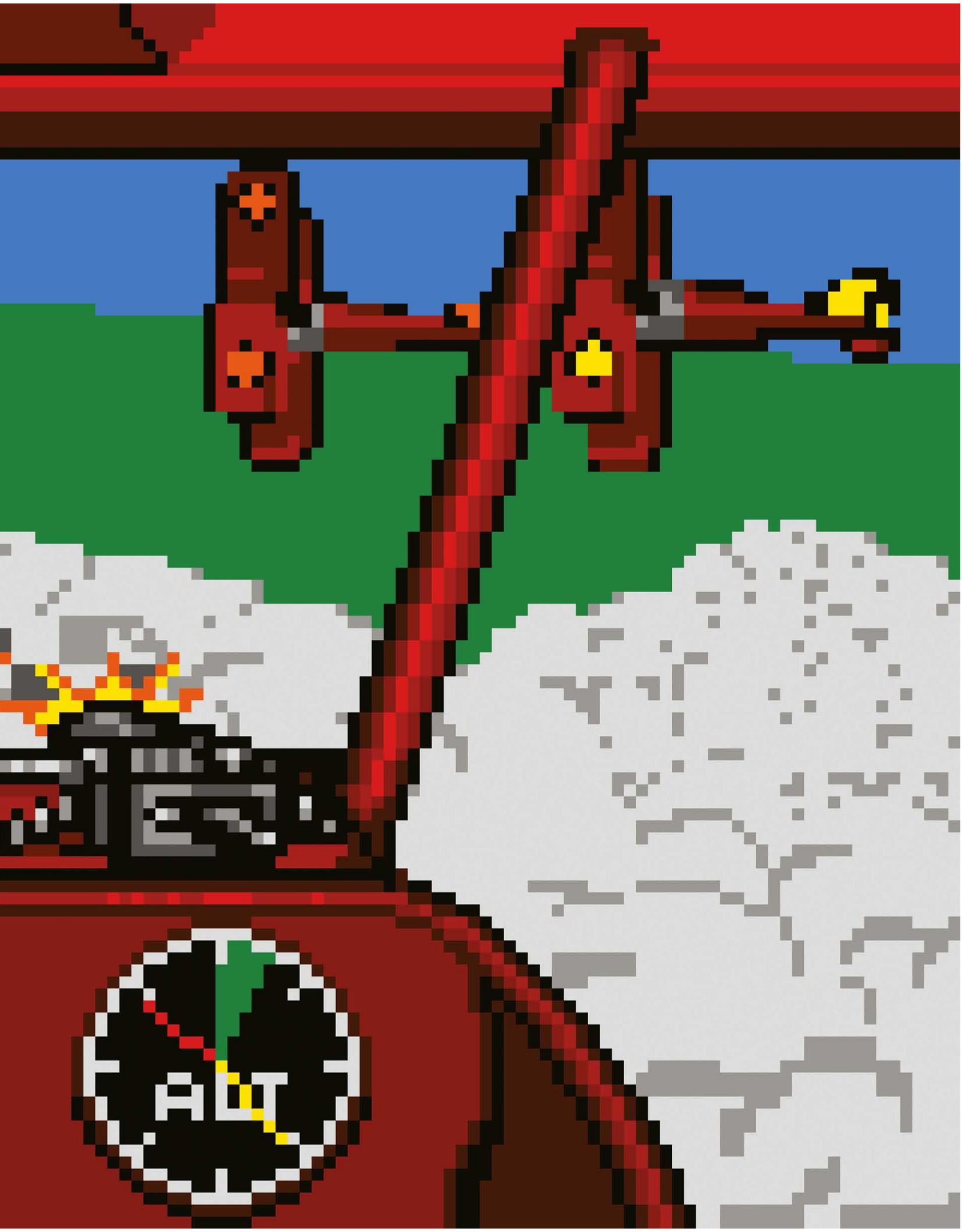
One weekend Bob stayed at the person's house who ran our *D&D* sessions and he had an Atari Lynx in his bag. Finally, someone else who appreciated Atari's handheld. He had loads of games as well and he soon enquired if I fancied a game of *Warbirds*.

If you're not aware, *Warbirds* is a very entertaining flight simulator, where the game's focus is very much on arcade action rather than attention to detail. I'd rinsed the game's few single-player missions but I'd never played it multiplayer, so the idea of playing against someone and testing my skills was too good an opportunity to pass up.

"Why don't we turn this into a proper session?" Bob said, pulling out a second Lynx and another copy of the game. I couldn't believe it. This was Lynx nirvana. Bob and Kevin (another made up name) were decent pilots, but they clearly didn't know the game as well as I did and I easily won the few games we played.

After a few more sessions we played *Xenophobe* and *Todd's Adventures In Slime World* and called it a day. I was eager for the next time Bob turned up with his Lynxes, but the day never came. You can probably guess where this is going, but Bob's games and handhelds had been stolen and the long arm of the law had finally caught up with him.

I never saw Bob again, but I'll always have those fond memories of beating him at his stolen games. Thank goodness I never took him up on his offer to buy some of them. ✱



THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO SUPERIOR SOFTWARE Limited

ARGUABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT PUBLISHER OF BBC MICRO GAMES, SUPERIOR SOFTWARE SUPPORTED THE SYSTEM FROM SOON AFTER ITS OUTSET UNTIL NEAR ITS DISCONTINUATION. THE FOLLOWING PAGES HIGHLIGHT SOME OF SUPERIOR'S FINEST RELEASES

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

Formed in 1982 by developers Richard Hanson and John Dyson, Superior Software launched with a handful of arcade-inspired BBC Micro titles. Then when the publisher's 1983 Beeb coin-op clone *Hunchback* topped the charts, a deal was made to make it an officially licensed title.

In 1984, Superior released its biggest seller to date in the form of the *Pole Position*-style racer *Overdrive*, and a BBC version of *Sinistar* called *DeathStar* did similarly well for the publisher in 1985.

Two other 1985 games further established Superior's reputation for quality BBC Micro fare: the puzzle platformer *Citadel* and the *Boulder Dash*-like *Repton*.

The following year, the company brought out more acclaimed Beeb originals like the gravity game *Thrust* and the run-and-gun *Stryker's Run*. It also re-released Acornsoft hits like *Elite* and *Revs* for the 8-bit system after buying its former rival's back catalogue.

Superior's 1987 output for the Beeb included the likes of the *Stryker's Run* sequel *Codename Droid* and the fun racer *Crazee Rider*, and in 1988 it brought the innovative arcade adventure *Exile* to the system and re-released the compelling puzzler *Imogen*. Superior also published popular conversions for the BBC that same year, including *Barbarian* and *The Last Ninja*.

Further Superior ports for Acorn's 8-bit micro followed as the Eighties gave way to the Nineties, with 1993's *Citadel 2* being one of its last hurrahs for the Beeb.

Now known as Superior Interactive, the firm focusses on releasing updated versions of its BBC Micro computer classics for PCs and mobile platforms. ✱

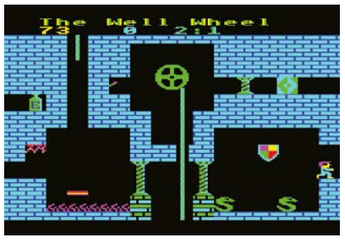
OVERDRIVE 1984

■ At first glance, *Overdrive* looks like the Beeb's answer to Namco's coin-op *Pole Position*, and it seems clear that's where Superior's racer takes its lead from. But you soon realise that *Overdrive* is a very different beast when you take it for a spin. Most obviously, the BBC game has a perpetually straight track, unlike the arcade game's meandering course. In *Overdrive* you race past fields, through the night, in snowy and desert environments, and along a riverbank. *Pole Position*, by comparison, is set entirely in a single location. Superior's game is also tougher, even if there are no puddles to avoid like in *Pole Position*. Instead, your car explodes on contact with rival drivers, unlike *Overdrive*'s coin-op inspiration where that only happens if you hit the roadside signs. Taken as a whole, these various distinctions give Superior's racer a quite different challenge from Namco's.

IN OVERDRIVE YOU RACE PAST FIELDS, THROUGH THE NIGHT, IN SNOWY AND DESERT ENVIRONMENTS, AND ALONG A RIVERBANK

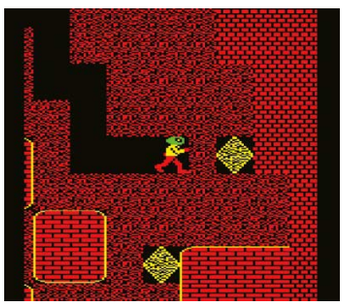
DEATHSTAR 1985

■ Superior's tribute to Williams' *Sinistar* foregoes the typical approach of Eighties coin-op clones where the original was replicated with a few changes made to its look and mechanics. In fact, apart from its name, *DeathStar* is identical to the coin-op favourite. Interestingly for a shoot-'em-up, rather than blasting opponents the focus is on collecting and converting crystals into projectiles to attack a boss that the standard enemies are constructing. You do have to avoid enemy fire, but your ship isn't harmed by collisions with foes. However, the *DeathStar* destroys your craft on contact, and it isn't easily dispatched.



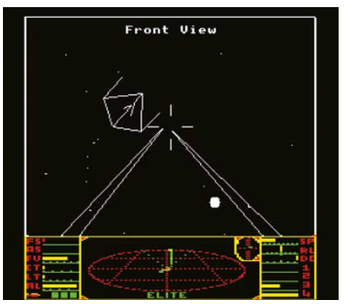
CITADEL 1985

■ What's interesting about *Citadel* is that it's equal parts arcade adventure and platformer, unlike the arcade-style platform games and platforming-light arcade adventures created by most other developers. *Citadel* also differentiates itself by effectively giving you a health bar in numerical form rather than contact with hazards and foes instantly killing you. You can also play Superior's game as a male or female protagonist, and its sprawling maze of levels has some impressively unpredictable challenges.



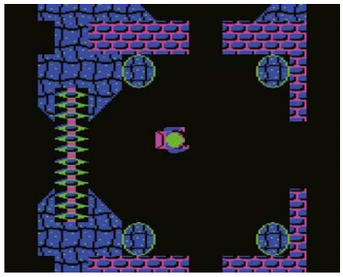
REPTON 1985

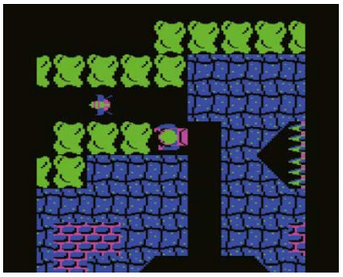
■ It's quite difficult to describe *Repton* without making it sound like *Boulder Dash*, and to be fair it is similar in many respects. However, some crucial differences make it an entirely distinct experience. For one, *Repton* shows you far less of the environment, so you can't plan nearly as far ahead. Then rather than fast reflexes and speedy navigation there's a greater emphasis on working out routes that won't leave you trapped or unable to secure treasure.



ELITE 1986

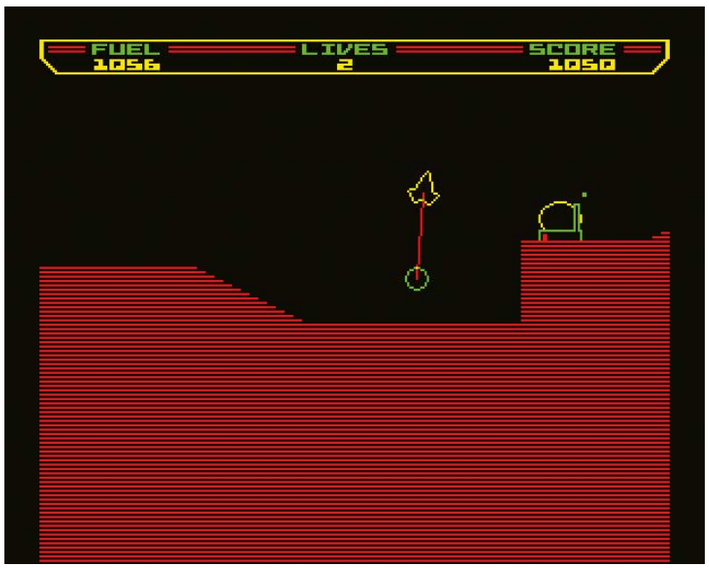
Of course, *Elite* was an Acornsoft original, but perhaps the definitive *Elite* was published by Superior after it secured its competitor's back catalogue. Although the Superior release provides BBC Micro owners with Acornsoft's impressive original, owners of the BBC Master get an enhanced version of the open-world, space trading combat simulator. Besides a more colourful instrument panel and cockpit view, everything moves faster and more smoothly in the Master version. There's also a new ship called the Cougar, and there's no in-game loading to disrupt proceedings. ▶





RAVENSKULL 1986

■ A compelling combination of *Gauntlet* and *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Ravenskull* manages to be greater than the sum of its parts. The maze-like arcade adventure gains depth from its layers of gameplay. Each level's treasure has to be collected before you can secure one quarter of a crucifix, and there are insects and hazards to avoid. Then in addition to these arcade elements there are objects that overcome obstacles and spells with unknown effects.



THRUST 1986

■ *Thrust* channels *Gravitar* and *Space Duel*, with the result that you have gravity and rotational force to contend with. It then adds a rescue element. You negotiate confined spaces under fire with a ship that's dragged down into harm's way by gravity and towards hazards by momentum. You have shields, but using these deactivates your weapon. To finish levels you fly heavy pods on a tethered beam into space while they pull your ship in all directions.

REVS 1986

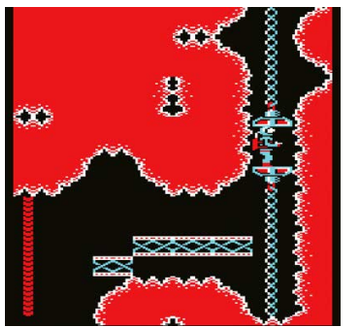
■ The version of *Revs* that Superior released has four more tracks than the Acornsoft original, so as well as Silverstone you can race at Brands Hatch, Donnington, Oulton and Snetterton. Its other notable enhancement is optional computer-controlled steering, which tempers the unforgiving nature of the original. Staying on course by getting your speed right on the bends remains a core challenge, as does safely passing your rivals.

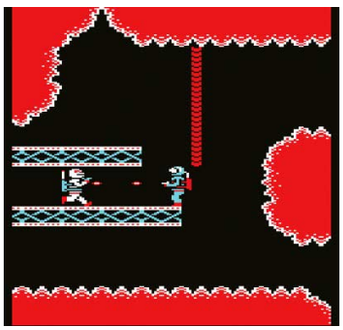
STRYKER'S RUN 1986

■ This quintessential Beeb run-and-gun is a riot of colour and remains a lot of fun to play. To make progress through its single, epic side-scrolling level you need to have extremely quick reactions and be able to adapt and learn your opponents' numerous attack patterns. Along the way you face ground troops, helicopter gunships and mines. Allied soldiers help you out, and there are aircraft to take into battle.

SPELLBINDER 1987

■ The detailed, monochrome graphics and trial-and-error nature of *Spellbinder* brings to mind arcade adventures more typically found on the Spectrum. That's no bad thing, as *Spellbinder* is visually impressive, and there are clues hidden throughout its locations that mean your objectives aren't too obscure. There are also ingredients for spells to be found and energy-draining foes to avoid on your quest to defeat an evil wizard.





CODENAME DROID: STRYKER'S RUN PART 2 1987

■ Despite *Codename Droid*'s subtitle indicating that it's the sequel to *Stryker's Run*, it wasn't designed to be a continuation of the series, and in fact it's a follow-up in name only. It was developed as an original concept, and this becomes apparent after a look at its gameplay. Whereas *Stryker's Run* is focussed almost entirely on combat, *Codename Droid* is an arcade adventure with object and obstacle-based puzzles. It does have a combat element, but the enemies in the game provide timing challenges rather than reaction tests. You don't fly helicopters, but there's a jetpack you use to access certain areas.

IT DOES HAVE A COMBAT ELEMENT, BUT THE ENEMIES IN THE GAME PROVIDE TIMING CHALLENGES RATHER THAN REACTION TESTS

CRAZEE RIDER 1987

■ Progressing between tracks in *Crazee Rider* requires you to finish in the top six of sixty riders. This would be hard enough, but your rivals leave you in the dirt as each race starts, so you have to plough through the pack at top speed just to stand any chance.

BONE CRUNCHER 1987

Despite its strange and morbid storyline, *Bone Cruncher* is an evolution of games like *Repton*. Instead of rocks there are living creatures to avoid, and instead of being affected by gravity these move left, right, up or down depending on which direction the last door that you went through was facing. In order to go through these you have to collect skeletons and make them into soap, which is the strange and morbid part. There are locked gates you need keys for and spiders to steer clear of, and you have a friend your foes can't hurt that you can send out in front of you.

PALACE OF MAGIC 1987

A follow-up to *Citadel* in all but name, *Palace Of Magic* shares its inspiration's format and some of its mechanics while differentiating itself with its level designs and surreal opponents. *Palace Of Magic* also distinguishes its gameplay in various ways. Its locations are more uniform in nature, in that there aren't setpiece rooms with unique mechanics like in *Citadel*. *Palace Of Magic*'s enemies all have set paths; there aren't foes that home in on you like *Citadel*'s monks. Lastly, *Palace Of Magic* doesn't give you a weapon, and its outdoor areas are more in keeping with its indoor screens than *Citadel*'s.

GRAND PRIX CONSTRUCTION SET 1987

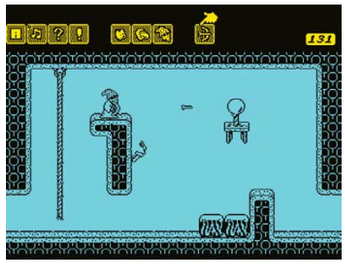
If you're thinking *Grand Prix Construction Set* sounds like Scalextric then you're not wrong! Superior's racer is a racing track play set in pixelated form. You build courses with straights, bends and crossovers before racing on your creations. Races are into-the-screen affairs, and there are stock tracks if you tire of making your own.

BARBARIAN – THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR 1988

Although a little blockier and gaudier than some other versions of the popular hack and slash, Superior's BBC Micro *Barbarian* still looks and plays the part. All of the moves are there, from attacks and blocks to acrobatics and decapitations. As with other iterations, there are two different arenas that you fight in, and as you cycle back and forth between those the combat gets progressively tougher.

IMOGEN 1988

The originality in *Imogen*'s design stems from its layered gameplay and innovative mechanics. It's also a joy to look at. Its platforming and puzzles typically require you to select one of three player characters for the task at hand. The cat is adept at jumping, but the monkey is capable of climbing. Then the wizard can use weapons and other items.



REVISITING RAVENSKULL

MARTIN EDMONDSON ON HIS COMPELLING ARCADE ADVENTURE

HOW DID *RAVENSKULL'S* DEVELOPMENT BEGIN?

When I was at school we had a computer club, and they had a BBC Micro there. I was then lucky enough to get a BBC Micro for Christmas. There was a guy at school called Nicholas Chamberlain who also had a BBC Micro, and we just started messing about writing games. I proposed one with four-directional smooth scrolling. It was based on an idea where you were in a creepy castle. The design happened as we went along, and actually it came together fairly rapidly.

WHAT THE INSPIRATIONS FOR RAVENSKULL'S DESIGN?

Gauntlet certainly influenced *Ravenskull*, and the whole *Dungeons & Dragons* look. I was always a fan of the artist Roger Dean. I loved all of his stuff, and its fantasy themes. Then spooky castles always used to appeal to me. That was very hard to get across on the BBC Micro with its chunky graphics and bright primary colours, but we did what we could. Then in terms of running around I suppose *Repton*, although that was a completely different game. But *Gauntlet* was a heavy influence. I put a lot of money into that as a kid.

DID ANYTHING INFLUENCE *RAVENSKULL'S* PUZZLES?

The puzzles were sort of inspired by *Dungeons & Dragons*. I didn't really play it, but I did like reading the campaign modules. One of them was called *Ravenloft*. It was about a castle owned by a vampire, and I found that all fascinating. A lot of that inspired *Ravenskull*, because I didn't want it to be a pure arcade game. I wanted spells with certain effects, some of which you would know about and some you had to learn about or talk to your friends about. I suppose I had a bigger imagination than the BBC Micro allowed for.

HOW MUCH INPUT DID SUPERIOR SOFTWARE HAVE?

Ravenskull was basically finished when we took it to Superior. It was the first and only company I took it too. There weren't too many BBC Micro publishers at the time. Acornsoft wasn't really a publisher as such because it had its own internal teams. But Superior just loved *Ravenskull*. It sent us a letter suggesting a change to make it more fun. It wanted there to be a way to kill the Ravenbees, so we added a bow and arrow to kill them just to give it more action. Pretty much straight away we had a publishing deal.

HAVE YOU ANY REGRETS ABOUT MAKING *RAVENSKULL*?

You started off having to run all the way around the side of the castle to get to the door to get in, which was such a dopey design decision. Every single time that you started the game you had to run around the outside of that castle. I just look back at it and think why? We had to test the game, and every time I would have to start at the beginning, even if I was testing something like the Ravenbees halfway through the game.

ACORN ARCADE

PETER JOHNSON on his coin-op tributes Overdrive and DeathStar

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START WITH SUPERIOR?
I was just finishing up an HND Computer Studies course, and I used the time when I should have been revising on making a version of *Q*Bert*. I sent that off to a whole bunch of publishers. I went with Superior because they were run by a programmer. Everything always went pretty well with them. Essentially I could do what I wanted. The relationship was more like working with a book publisher in the way that I could come to them with something I'd written and say, "Right, this is what I've done."

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE *OVERDRIVE* FOR THE MICRO?
Richard Hanson sent me a sprite routine. That let me do things that I couldn't have done otherwise. I was thinking about what I could do, and I thought about 3D scaling. I obviously didn't write a scaling sprite routine; I had to draw eight or however many pictures of a car getting progressively bigger. It might have been that I was playing *Pole Position* in the arcades at the time. But I just thought you could get that sense of movement by using colour switching to do the movement of the sides of the track.

HOW DID *OVERDRIVE* EVOLVE?
Overdrive was really like a Game & Watch game on a big scale. That was really all it was. I didn't put bends in the tracks because I wouldn't have been able to use colour switching. The aim was avoiding collisions, and therefore if you collided then your car blew up! I think having five environments was just to make *Overdrive* different, and all it meant was using a couple of different colours. The clouds would have been drawn with random lines, and the pyramids on the desert level were just triangles.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAKE A *SINISTAR* CLONE?
I think I just liked *Sinistar* a lot and wanted to do a version of it. Most of the other games I had done at that time were arcade conversions to some degree or another. Although we shouldn't have called it *DeathStar*, because it was hugely trademarked. But I lived near Whitley Bay, and it had loads of arcades. I could go up there and see pretty much anything new, so that gave me an excuse to go every couple of months. Quite often that was how I would decide what I was going to do next.

HOW DID DEATHSTAR'S SPEECH COME ABOUT?
Well that really depended on if you had the speech chip or not. I read one review that said that the sound was a bit rubbish, but I bet the reviewer didn't have a speech chip! The speech made all the difference. Obviously you could only say things that the chip's developers had recorded, I think it was Kenneth Kendal the BBC news reader they recorded. So the DeathStar laughing is just him saying the letter 'R' repeatedly. But it was terrifying! People must have been thinking, "Bloody hell! What was that?" Although I didn't get any letters of complaint.

THE LAST NINJA 1988

The Beeb computer was never going to be able to replicate the sublime aesthetics of the C64 version, and so you get four-colour blocky graphics and no soundtrack. That aside, the original's gameplay is translated very faithfully by the Superior conversion. Its level designs are also spot on, and its combat has that same intense feel.

SPYCAT 1988

In terms of objectives and structure, *Spycat* doesn't veer too far away from your typical BBC Micro arcade adventure. However, its British spy narrative and themes scores it points for originality. The likes of CCTV cameras drain your energy, as do assorted enemies. There's platforming, but primarily you find objects and work out which challenges they can help you with.

EXILE 1988

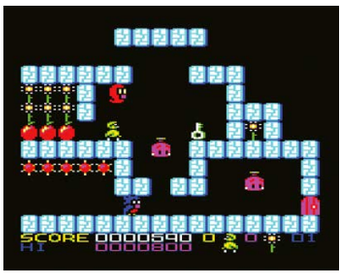
In *Exile*, you're dropped into an open-world alien planet and challenged to progress through experimentation. Real-world physics and weather conditions apply to the player character and the environments he's in, so he can be blown about by high winds or float around at speed in low gravity. Just as impressively, friendly and hostile characters respond to what's in their line of sight and the sounds they hear.

FIRETRACK 1989

Given how good a shoot-'em-up *Firetrack* is it's no wonder that Superior re-released it for the Beeb and converted it to the Electron. Like *Uridium*, *Firetrack* takes its lead from the coin-op *Star Force*, but there are no deadly raised obstacles. There's silky-smooth scrolling and in-game tunes, and screens filled with ammo, opponents, explosions and ground targets. *Firetrack* is purely based on blasting. There aren't even power-ups or bosses to distract from its intense firefights.

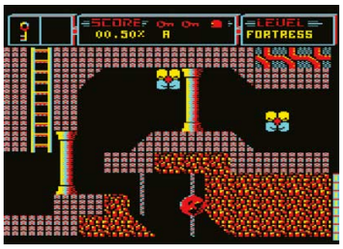
PREDATOR 1989

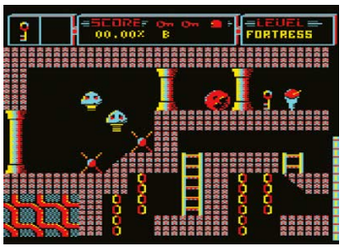
Inspired by the Arnold Schwarzenegger flick of the same name, Superior's BBC version of *Predator* doesn't take any prisoners. Even flocks of birds prove to be deadly! It's not that there are more enemy soldiers than in other versions, and the Predator itself isn't tougher in this iteration. It's that the low-resolution mode that the game uses gives you so much less space to avoid bullets, hazards and attacks.



QWAK 1989

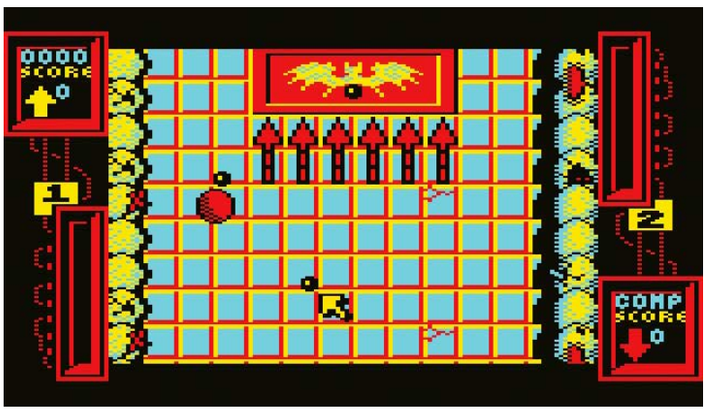
Part platformer, part puzzler, *Qwak* tasks you with clearing single-screen levels that while adorably cute are anything but child's play to complete. Contributing to *Qwak*'s challenge are precariously placed fruit that you collect for points, deadly enemies that you dispatch with eggs and locked doors that you need to find keys for.





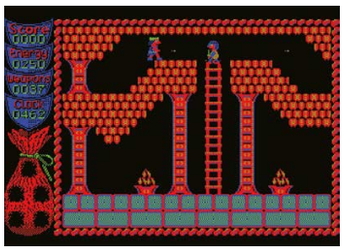
RICOCHET 1989

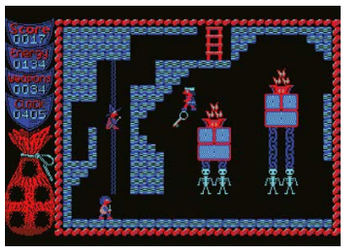
In many respects, *Ricochet* takes its lead from *Citadel*. It has flick-screen levels, you have energy not lives and collectable objects overcome obstacles, but *Ricochet* differentiates itself with its spherical hero. Squashing him creates kinetic energy that when released propels him upwards or across the screen. There's much bouncing around, but with practice you can get him over obstacles and to high up places.



BALLISTIX 1989

The one and two-player modes in *Ballistix* are very different. The two-player offering is like table football, except that you blast the ball around with missiles. You do the same in single-player mode, but instead of an opponent gravity sends the ball towards your goal, like in pinball. As the game progresses, more and more obstacles are introduced.



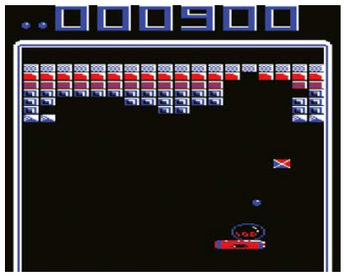


CAMELOT 1989

It's impressive how *Camelot* distinguishes itself from other arcade adventures by keeping some fundamentals of the genre in place while dispensing with others. Instead of assembling something, your objective is to score a set number of points. Bags of gold are worth lots of points, but you also get some for blasting foes. However, they re-spawn and are harder to beat. Then instead of working out puzzles, it's always obvious which objects are required to overcome each obstacle.

HOSTAGES 1990

The BBC *Hostages* lacks the 16-bit originals' animated cutscenes and cinematic presentation, but it does faithfully adapt their three levels. The first has you positioning commandos in an embassy while avoiding snipers. A third-person stage has you taking out terrorists and abseiling into the embassy. Lastly, you have to save hostages from the remaining terrorists in a technically impressive first-person finale.



HYPERBALL 1990

Bat and ball games tap into that same part of the brain as shoot-'em-ups, so it follows that *Hyperball* provides power-ups for your bat. The collectables that drop down the screen include weapons, bat extensions and multiple balls. There are also bubbles to collect for points, which you can spend on upgrades between levels.

PERPLEXITY 1990

A fascinating reimagining of *Pac-Mania*, *Perplexity* sets you more cerebral objectives than fleeing from ghosts and munching dots. Instead, you push rocks together to form collectable diamonds and push keys into locked doors, all while staying out of the way of ghosts that, although deadly, don't chase you.

CITADEL 2 1993

Citadel 2 was an original title before it was turned into a sequel, however it has much in common with its predecessor. You can't kill most enemies, for example. Items can only be picked up or dropped on special platforms, and you complete it by solving puzzles and collecting lots of gems.

retro GAMER's FAVOURITE...

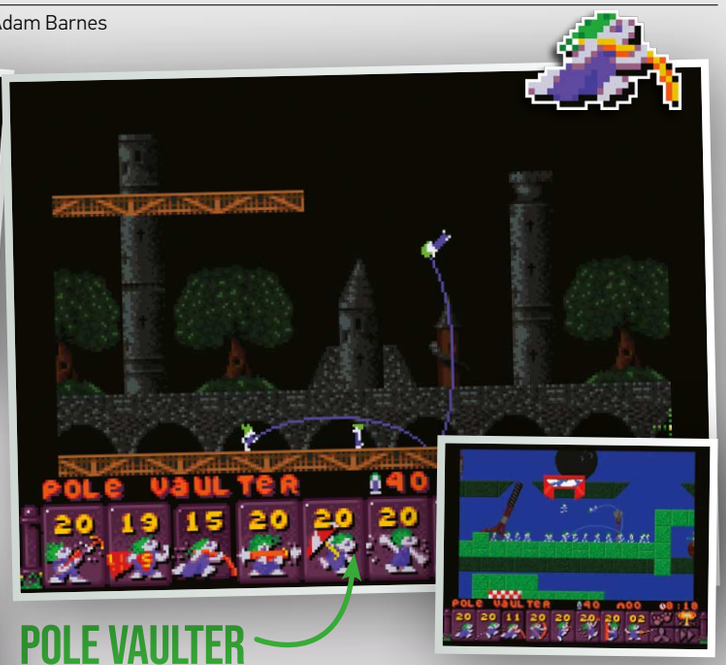
LEMMINGS ABILITIES

OUR GREEN-HAIRED MEANDERERS HAVE BEEN CLIMBING, FLOATING, MINING, BASHING AND BLOCKING FOR 35 YEARS STRAIGHT NOW. WHAT BETTER WAY TO CELEBRATE SUCH AN ANNIVERSARY THAN HIGHLIGHTING THE VERY BEST OF THOSE ABLED RODENTS?

Words by Adam Barnes

FLOATER

Not to be confused with the mess your uncle made in your washroom the last time he visited, the Floater is arguably the most iconic of all Lemmings. It's easy to see why: it was the deciding factor between level completion or ending up a green and blue mess on the floor. A choice many of us intentionally decided against for our own morbid humour.



POLE VAULTER

It's tough to pick out the best from *Lemmings 2*'s 50+ skills. The Pole Vaulter might not be the most extravagant of all of the new Lemmings that the sequel brought and it has to be said that it's quite finicky to use effectively. But that cool animation as the pole itself bends under the weight of the Lemming flinging through the air is just fun to see.

BOMBER

Where the Floater was a choice of omission, the Bomber is the Lemming for those who preferred to brutalise these creatures with a little more clarity. Maybe we're feeling a bit poetic, but there's something noble about that one hero – an individual selected out of a mass of sprawling clones – to sacrifice themselves for the greater good.

BUILDER

It's easier to destroy than it is to create and for that we must respect the Builder Lemming. We wouldn't want to be so incriminating of DMA Design's true intentions, but we like to think there's a real-world comparison here; brick by brick the Builder works until his sack is empty, then it's a shrug and 'job's done' with half a roof hanging unsupported in the air.

BAZOOKA

At its very core *Lemmings* is a game about deforming the terrain to make the road home easier. There are many ways to deform said terrain: digging, bashing, exploding, mining. A plethora of choices. You're abundant with deformations. But when it comes down to it, when all is said and done, this is a Lemming with a bazooka… why would you choose any other method?

ATTRACTOR

So we have to admit that the humble Blocker Lemming was originally going to make it on this list, but it feels disrespectful to this *Lemmings 2* upgrade. The Attractor achieves practically the same as the Blocker, but it does so with flair, with panache, with (dare we say it?) razzmatazz. And each Lemming Tribe comes with their own style of musical expression too, which is neat.

BASHER

Lemmings 2 brought with it numerous new tools to complete its levels, but the Basher proves you don't need to overcomplicate things. All you need is a bit'a brawn, some elba grease and a 'ard day's graft to get ya through t'other side. Your guess is as good as ours as to why we imagine the Basher to be a Northern lad.

SUPERLEM

This Lemming might not appear too many times in *Lemmings 2*, but that makes it all the more tempting when it does make an appearance. One click and it's up and away but, much like the Super Sheep from Team17's *Worms*, the SuperLem requires a degree of tact and deftness to achieve your goal. With great responsibility, and all that…

JUMPER

Here's a Lemming whose only skill is to jump. Thrilling. Good for getting over small gaps, true, but that's it, right? Well the significance of the Jumper comes in its capacity to cancel out other skills, and that's arguably one of the most important tools in the game. This Lemming is also critical for getting the fastest completion times, if you know how to use it smartly.

NUKE

Not a Lemming, admittedly, but still the most noteworthy skill in the whole series. Some games allow you to restart the level through a pause menu. Yawn. Here it's a press of a button and your little Lemming lollygaggers are kaput. No more. They're ex-Lemmings. Raise your hand if you also regularly trapped a colony of Lemmings between two Blockers and hit that button just to hear the pops. [That was definitely me – Ed]

MAGAZINE CRAFT

GABRIEL NIETO JIMENEZ

From his words for the weekly computing magazine MicroHobby to his key role in Club Nintendo, Gabriel Nieto Jimenez has been pivotal in the development of the videogames industry in Spain. Retro Gamer speaks to him about his varied and fascinating career

Words by Graeme Mason

THEN

Fascinated by computers and programming, Gabriel slowly immersed himself in this new world, culminating in his role as a reviewer for the newly formed *MicroHobby* magazine in 1984. From here, he fostered a love of computer games, helping form the games-focussed *MicroMania*, before switching sides to the Spanish developer/publisher Topo Soft.

NOW

After his adventures in programming and journalism, Gabriel worked for Erbe, then Nintendo, helping to create the Spanish branch of the famous Japanese games company and giving it a uniquely Hispanic flavour. Today, he is retired and focussed on another life passion, making music, specifically a musical.

How did you get into computing, Gabriel?
I was always quite interested in computing and started reading programming books. I was fascinated by this new world, so I began researching it, reading the magazines in this field, mostly foreign at this point, as there was only one Spanish magazine. Little by little, I came to understand what it was all about, until I was completely immersed in the world of computers.

And from here, you presumably discovered a love of computer games?
That actually came later, when I began to work at *MicroHobby*. I was given the role of writing game reviews, something that was totally new to me at the time, and on which I knew practically nothing. So, slowly, I got involved in that world, too.

Do you recall when you first discovered the ZX Spectrum?
Firstly, it was not the ZX Spectrum itself, but the previous model, the Sinclair ZX81, which was much less powerful. I found it in a shop, in a department store. I didn't even know what it was, but I became interested, and that led me to the Spectrum.

As an aside, why do you think the Spectrum was so popular in Spain?
I think it was affordable, a reasonable price for the time. Plus, it was a new experience, a new way of accessing something that until that point had been the preserve of a select few. Overall, however, and most importantly, I think it was about the games that you could play on it.

It's always about the games! Let's move on to yourself – how and when did you start your writing career?
I studied at the Faculty Of Information Science [at the Complutense University in Madrid – Ed], not in journalism, but in the field of audiovisual communication. Despite this, there were many things common between the two industries. And ever since I was quite young, I have enjoyed writing and been good at it. So I had a solid foundation thanks to this.

What was the written computer scene like in Spain? Did you get British magazines such as *Crash, Your Sinclair, CVG* and so on?
When [*MicroHobby*] started, there was only really one other magazine, and that was average. It was in black and white, and didn't offer too much information – but that was all there was. Apart from that, yes, we tried to read magazines that came from other countries. *Computer & Video Games* was one of them, and another I can't remember, but they both helped access information that was difficult to get hold of over here.

Did you work for *MicroHobby* from issue one? Were you staff or freelance?
I contributed to the first issue and was part

» Like its British counterparts, *MicroHobby* had a close relationship with its readers.

» One of Gabriel's developer interviews.

» *MicroHobby*'s look at Elite's *Airwolf* makes note of its great difficulty.

» Here's the spectacular Alfonso Azpiri cover for Topo Soft's finest hour.

My BEST COVER

GABRIEL TALKS TO US ABOUT THE MAG COVER HE ADMIRES THE MOST

"There have been many great covers over the years, but undoubtedly my favourite was for *MicroHobby* issue one with the kid pretending to be in *ET*, flying into the sky towards the sun. It was epic, and what's more, it was the cover that appeared throughout the television campaign and marked a turning point for videogames in Spain. Until then, there was practically nothing; from that moment on, an industry was created."

» [ZX Spectrum] Like many Spectrum fans, Gabriel was a big fan of Matthew Smith's *Manic Miner* and its follow-up, *Jet Set Willy*.

of the team that created the magazine. First of all, I worked as a freelancer. However, before the magazine went on sale, the editor asked me to join the staff team, and from that moment on, I earned a living working for *MicroHobby*. It's also true that the editor owed me quite a lot of money, as I had already written many articles for the first few issues, so in this way, he saved on what he owed me!

> "When [MicroHobby] started, there was only really one other magazine"
> GABRIEL NIETO JIMENEZ

What was your actual take on the magazine, *MicroHobby*?
In my opinion, it was a very interesting magazine in every sense, because it dealt with computing from the perspective of gaming, explaining what programming is and highlighting issues related to hardware. Above all, though, it was a weekly publication, and for those who bought it, it was a complete revolution in those times.

What was your role at the magazine?
I wrote all the articles about games and some reports on general computing. I reported on IT and computing fairs and, from time to time, wrote more varied articles, not about videogames at all but other subjects, completely on my own initiative. I occasionally wrote articles on computing in general – I also covered reports on SIMO [Spain's premier computing show], for example, as well as all the fairs and events that took place in Spain.

What was your favourite type of feature to write?
Those on videogames and everything related to them. I also enjoyed interviewing videogame creators and companies, as well as covering related trade shows.

Do you have any favourite games from that time?
I can't say there was a single favourite, but I have a special fondness for *Manic Miner*, because it was the first game I reviewed in the magazine. I also have special memories for others from that time: *Sabre Wulf*, *Underwurlde*, *Knight Lore*, *Back To Skool*, *Saboteur*... all of them belong to the Hobby Press era, the early days, and have a very special meaning for me. Each one brought

I REMEMBER WHEN

GETTING STARTED

"I met José Ignacio Gómez Centurión, and he told me about this new project [*MicroHobby* magazine]. It marked my entry into videogames, computing and, officially, publishing."

I REMEMBER WHEN

NON-STOP RINGING

"The Monday after the *MicroHobby* TV campaign had shown, the phone wouldn't stop ringing. We were completely overwhelmed, and realised the magazine was succeeding far beyond what we had ever imagined."

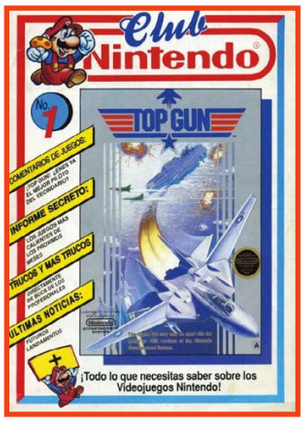
My BEST PRESS TRIP

GABRIEL WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HIS FIRST SIMO

The Madrid computer expo SIMO TCI had been running for several years before the wave of Eighties micros moved it away from stuffy IBMs, software utilities and (believe it or not) office furniture. Originally devised in the early Sixties, the show initially focused on corporate concerns, before the games entertainment industry entered its space, causing attendance to balloon and paving the way for its peak years of the late-Nineties and early Noughties. "The first SIMO I attended was a special moment," remembers Gabriel, "as it marked the arrival in Spain of computers and the world of computing at a popular level."

» IFEMA Madrid organised many SIMO conventions. (Image: copyright Heidi Meud.)

» Erbe's version of the *Club Nintendo* magazine, before Nintendo itself took over.



» The first of Nintendo's own Spanish *Club Nintendo* magazines.

» *MicroHobby* wasn't shy about using shock tactics: "Don't be left hanging," this advert grimly declares.

▶ something new that gradually became established in the next generation of computers and consoles.

What was writing for *MicroHobby* like?
It was brilliant. We were like a big family. We had a fantastic atmosphere and all got on very well. We were colleagues, but also shared our leisure time. A wonderful, marvellous period in which I was really happy.

Who else was involved?
The magazine's editor was José Ignacio Gómez Centurión. He was the owner as well. Otherwise, there were four or five of us who worked on it: editor-in-chief África Pérez Tolosa, Domingo Gómez, the director, layout artist Rosa María Capitel and Miguel Hinojosa, who was in charge of the *MicroHobby* cassettes.

On that subject, what did you think of *MicroHobby* cassettes? They were a great way to discover new games.
MicroHobby Cassette was an attempt to increase the magazine's profitability further, although it was already doing quite well. The idea was to add something new and offer an alternative to readers who didn't want to type in the very long codes we included in the magazine. I thought it was a brilliant idea, but I wasn't directly involved – I had enough on my plate with running a ton of sections in the magazine itself!

» The Spectrum adaptation of artist Alfonso Azpiri's own comic, *Lorna*.

How did you get the games for review?
I managed to get games via the distributors I was in contact with. I got in touch with Erbe Software and the other companies that worked on bringing games to Spain. Everyone was very cooperative, particularly when we explained that it was for a weekly magazine that would appear on television as part of a major advertising campaign. Everybody wanted to be involved, including the companies that made games, such as Dinamic and Opera Soft.

Tell us more about that TV advert.
It was a surprise to everyone because there were initially no plans for television advertising. But when we made the important decision to turn the magazine from monthly to weekly, we had to reach as many readers as possible as quickly as possible. It was a very risky move, and we needed it to succeed from the very first issue, which it did.

Why did *MicroHobby* become weekly? Your workload must have been immense!
Initially, it was planned as a monthly publication. However, one month before its launch, the plan changed to weekly. So we split the material we had created into sections to cover the different issues, since it had fewer pages. However, it still took considerable effort to maintain that level of information each week. It was difficult, to tell the truth, but fun.

This being the Eighties, publishing software was in its infancy. How did it work at *MicroHobby*?

» [ZX Spectrum] As in the UK, Spain adored the output of Ultimate Play The Game.

» [ZX Spectrum] One of Gabriel's favourite games: *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth.*

» The *MicroHobby* cassette version saved all the laborious typing.

ERBE Software Presenta
SPECTRUM 48K · COMMODORE 64
FRANKIE
ocean
OBSERVA! INVESTIGA! AVERIGUA! OBJETOS QUE SUPONES NORMALES PUEDEN SER TU PASAPORTE AL EXITO. EN ESTE JUEGO DE JUEGOS NECESITARAS LA DESTREZA DEL REY DEL ARCADE, DE AVENTURERO, DE SUPERDETECTIVE Y MUCHO MAS. FRANKIE TE DICE: RELAJATE Y LLEVA EL PLACER, LA GUERRA, EL AMOR Y LA FE HASTA SU CUMBRE PARA PODER ENTRAR EN EL CENTRO DE LA SALA DEL PLACER
DISTRIBUCION EXCLUSIVA PARA ESPAÑA ERBE SOFTWARE, SANTA ENGRACIA, 17, TEL. 447 34 10. 28010 MADRID

» Erbe's main business was importing software from the UK.

> "We were like a big family" GABRIEL NIETO JIMENEZ

At the beginning, we used typewriters, and the layouts were constructed by pasting text without proper layout equipment. It was all very basic, as it was back then. Then, little by little, we improved it, using technology, as, being a computer magazine interested in everything new on the scene, we tried to incorporate new tech as it came out. In fact, apart from using the typewriter for drafts, I would often use a Spectrum word processor at home when under pressure to finish tasks.

Like most magazines in the pre-internet era, the covers sold the mag. *MicroHobby* had some amazing art courtesy of José Maria Ponce – what did you think of his work?
I think it was one of the magazine's great successes. José was a genius. Every one of his covers felt like a discovery, and we all enjoyed it whenever he came up with new ideas. Sometimes he even hid things in the covers themselves for us to look for. He gave me one of his covers as a gift, an illustration before I got married that featured my wife and me riding on a magic carpet. I treasure it dearly – as I said, José was a true genius.

How did that happen? That must have been an honour!
Every time he did a cover, we would tell him what the most important thing in that issue would be, and he would come up with a proposal that was always original and surprising. Surprisingly, just before I got married, he came up with a cover that, rather than feature content from the magazine, was about the step I was about to take in my life – getting married. It was a tremendous surprise and a happy moment; I still have it, and it's very emotional for me. I appear next to my wife on this flying carpet. If you put the cover next to a mirror, upside down, it reads, "Congratulations Gabriel and Marisa."

That's very cool. After a few years at *MicroHobby*, you began writing for another magazine, *MicroManía*. What happened?
I started working with another team to create *MicroManía*. We were mostly the people already producing *MicroHobby* and began working on it the same way, but this time, the magazine totally focussed on the world of videogames, taking into account that I was in charge of those sections in *MicroHobby*. After the fourth issue, the editor thought it would be better if I continued as editor at *MicroManía*, so I left *MicroHobby* and devoted myself entirely to the new magazine.

How was *MicroManía* different to working on *MicroHobby*?
The idea was that *MicroHobby* was a publication devoted entirely to the ZX Spectrum. *MicroManía* allowed us to branch out to the other computers on the scene, such as the Amstrad CPC and MSX, and focus on their games. It was very different from ▶

I REMEMBER WHEN

TAKING OVER
"When José Ignacio asked me to run *MicroManía*. *MicroHobby* opened up computing to home users, while *MicroManía* aimed to become the voice of an increasingly important industry – games."

» *MicroHobby* cover artist José María Ponce specialised in arcane images such as this cover for issue two.

» Like most of its British peers, *MicroHobby* featured type-in listings.

» José María Ponce's striking cover to issue 29, celebrating Beyond Software's sci-fi strategy, *Shadowfire*.

» Gabriel's multi-part feature on BASIC programming was a highlight of *MicroHobby*'s early issues.

> "We gave [Club Nintendo Magazine] our own personality and, in a very short time, turned it into an important marketing tool"
> GABRIEL NIETO JIMENEZ

» From its very first issue of November 1984, *MicroHobby* packed lots of content into its 32 pages.

I REMEMBER WHEN

A DIFFICULT CHOICE

"I left Hobby Press. It was a sad day, as, even though I would be earning more money, I'd be working in videogames instead of talking about them."

▶ *MicroHobby*, and I was determined to keep it that way because I believed we were entering a new era and that it was important for us to clearly differentiate ourselves from it.

How did the computer magazines change in Spain as the 8-bit era came to an end?

They changed a lot because 8-bit computers disappeared, and the arrival of new computers brought new and different ways to play computer games. It was a much more established era, less adventurous. Furthermore, other elements closely related to computing and technology began to appear [in the magazines]: new peripherals to talk about, new operating systems, and the important emergence of Windows and Apple. It was a totally different era, and perhaps it became much more professional. It covered much more ground, but it lost that wonderful spirit of the early magazines of the Eighties.

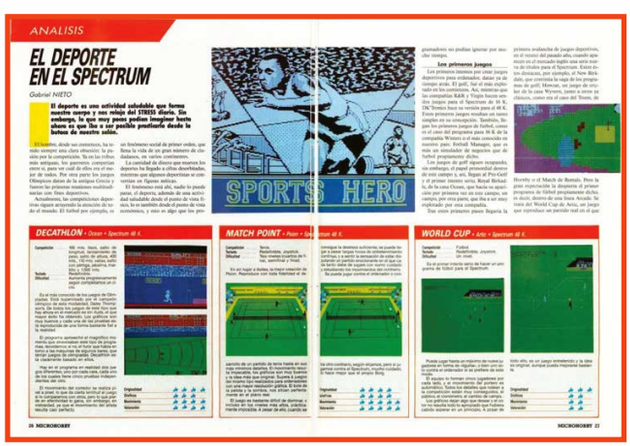
Did you work for any other magazines back then or since?

I eventually stopped working in the world of publishing and went on to run a videogame development company. There, instead of writing and talking about games, I spent a few years creating them with a team of programmers and graphic designers. It was a totally different time. I left *MicroManía* in January 1988 when I started working for Erbe and its videogame company.

This was Topo Soft, right?

Yes. I was there when it was making a lot of games for the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX and even the Atari computers. Then, the Commodore Amiga and, finally, for the PC. Our greatest project was a game called *Viaje Al Centro De La Tierra* (*Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*) based on the Jules Verne novel. It was a great success because we made it for all the platforms we had previously worked on at that point. It was a very elaborate project, with graphics drawn by Alfonso Azpiri [a talented Spanish comic artist known for his Spectrum game covers such as *Abu Simbel Profanation* and *Lorna*, based on his own comic strip] specifically for the game. He gave us these amazing drawings, and we built the characters from those. It was quite an adventure, and I believe the best project we did at the time. The game and Topo Soft received numerous awards from various gaming publications. It became one of Topo Soft's biggest hits, but it was a big risk. It was a joint project across the company, with all the programmers and artists involved. We kept the hype up, releasing small fragments and sketches of the game. Actually, our best-selling game was *Emilio Butragueno Futbol*, which sold over 200,000 units – an unthinkable figure at the time!

» Gabriel pilots a magic carpet with his wife behind him in this special cover from José María Ponce.



» It's a sports-themed spread, with *Decathlon*, *Match Point* and *World Cup* all covered.

» *MicroHobby*'s review of Ultimate's *Alien 8*, complete with 18 (!) screenshots.

» "Return To The Wild West" – *MicroHobby* celebrates Ultimate's isometric cowboy game *Gunfright*.

What made Topo Soft so successful?
It had a large investment, which was a decisive factor – we wanted to occupy an important position within the Spanish software industry, which was booming at that time with companies such as Dinamic and Opera Soft. We decided to create a large group of programmers and artists to develop a series of games with precisely that objective.

You mentioned Dinamic. Was there any big rivalry with it?
Not at first, but when Erbe invested in Topo Soft to turn it into a software company on the scale of Dinamic, it did create some rivalry. The year I joined, Dinamic had won practically everything given out annually by the magazines; our goal was to challenge that.

Why did you leave Topo Soft?
I left because its time was coming to an end. Topo was an Erbe company and had been acquired with investment in mind. And what happened in that period was that videogame sales began to decline slightly, other platforms began to emerge, and Topo continued, but with minimal staff and its games were developed outside of the company by freelancers.

Where did you go?
Erbe was first responsible for distributing the Game Boy in Spain, and they asked me to join them on this new project. It did well, achieving unthinkable sales for Nintendo, thanks mainly to Erbe's enormous distribution network. With that success, Erbe also distributed the Super Nintendo.

Erbe's success was cut short by a massive warehouse fire. What happened?
To this day, it's a mystery. There was a lot of speculation at the time because the warehouse contained a huge stock of Nintendo games. The rest is legend, but that fire precipitated Nintendo's official arrival in Spain as its own subsidiary.

So, you finally joined Nintendo in the summer of 1993?
Yes. From that moment, all of us who had been working for Erbe became a part of Nintendo as it officially arrived in Spain. It was excellent news not only for the people who worked there but, of course, for the Nintendo users, who already numbered in the hundreds of thousands. And me, after all those years of adventures with magazines and programming, I then spent many years working for Nintendo. I created [Nintendo Of Spain], which was quite different from what it had done in other countries. I focussed a lot on it, and we created a club that left quite an impression on many of Nintendo's users who shared their experiences with us at the time.

Tell us about the *Club Nintendo* magazine and your responsibilities there.
The company thought that, because I came from the magazine world, I would be a good fit. The truth is, they gave me carte blanche to launch *Club Nintendo*, a club that in Spain was quite different from those in other countries. We gave it our own personality and, in a very short time, turned it into an important marketing tool, capable of connecting users in a way that had not been realised before. We distributed around 300,000 copies of the magazine to members, publishing it every two months. It was an important link to the users.

What are you up to today?
Currently, well, I'm retired, and I spend my time making music, which is one of my passions in life. I'm working on a kind of musical, which is something I've wanted to do since I was very young. Now that I have the time, the means, and the necessary material to do so, well, that's what I'm working on.

Finally, what's been your favourite period from your career?
I think my time at *MicroHobby* was professionally the most important of my life. I have never been as happy in any other job as I was in those days. We were helping to give a voice to an unknown world, turning every new game, console and computer into an unforgettable experience for an entire generation. ✱

Our thanks to Gabriel for his time. For more on Topo Soft, check out David Crookes' excellent feature on the company inside **Retro Gamer** 190. Thanks also to Lester Drake for assistance with translation and localisation.

My PROUDEST MOMENT

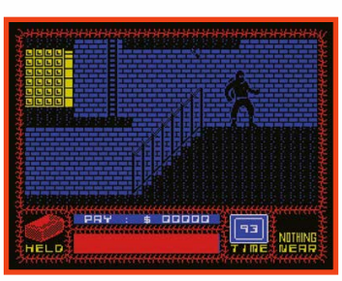
FROM MICROHOBBY TO MICROMANÍA

"I'm most proud of when the team we had created at *MicroHobby* set out to create a new magazine in a very short time, *MicroManía*. I also have much personal satisfaction from the fact that when I took over *MicroManía*, it was selling 15,000 copies; when I left, it was already selling as many as 85,000 copies."

I REMEMBER WHEN

A DAWNING REALISATION

"I was interviewed [about my career] many years later, because it was only then that I realised what I had achieved."



» [ZX Spectrum] Another favourite in the *MicroHobby* offices: Clive Townsend's *Saboteur*.

TIME
195

ENEMY
25

M

LEFT 1
OUT 0

SCORE
4248

EX

Gain Ground

EVERY CENTIMETRE COUNTS

» MEGA DRIVE » 1991 » SANRITSU DENKI

I grew up in Northern Ireland, during The Troubles. So while the news was filled with bombings, shootings and general sectarianism (somebody graffitied 'F**k the pope' on a wall near where I lived) it kind of washed over me. It was expected, having never known anything else. (It was a bit of a culture shock when I moved to Bournemouth in 2003 and none of the police were armed, or drove about in armoured Land Rover Defenders.)

Anyway, I'd bought my Mega Drive and a short walk from where I lived was an independent video rental shop that also rented games. Weird games. Import games too. There was a Joshi wrestling one that was all in Japanese and I couldn't work out how to play. There was a good selection and I think I rented out nearly all of them over time. But the one I kept going back to was *Gain Ground*.

I've only just found out there was a plot to it as none of the games came with manuals; it's about being a war simulation or something. I didn't know, I just had lots and lots of characters to use to get through the levels. A favourite one of mine is the Odin-looking Viking guy with the huge fast-firing arrows. But each one has its own strengths and suitability for whatever the levels throw at you. Some have long-range attacks, others like to get up close and personal, some offer support, and some you just don't want to use. I liked the way you'd unlock new ones by picking them up and escaping through the exit with them.

I don't think I ever completed it, though I'd hired it out of the shop enough times. Still, it was a nice distraction from when the town centre got blown up twice. *

ULTIMATE GUIDE

INDIANA JONES™ and the FATE of ATLANTIS

THE WORLD WOULD HAVE TO WAIT 19 YEARS AFTER INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE TO ENJOY ANOTHER INDY MOVIE BUT IT ONLY TOOK THREE YEARS FOR LUCASARTS TO DEVELOP A RIP-ROARING VIDEOGAME ADVENTURE THAT MORE THAN FILLED THE GAP

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS
- **DEVELOPER:** LUCASARTS
- **PLATFORM:** PC, AMIGA, MAC
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** POINT-AND-CLICK ADVENTURE

"DEVELOPED BY LUCASARTS USING ITS SCUMM ENGINE, FATE OF ATLANTIS WAS THE COMPANY'S EIGHTH RELEASE"

To beat *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, you need to have your wits about you. Failing that, you can let your fists do the talking or team up with an archeologist-cum-psychic to tackle the game's many puzzles as an intrepid duo. As it happens, the choice is entirely yours and your decision will have a big impact on how you experience one of the most spellbinding point-and-click adventures ever made.

Developed by LucasArts using its SCUMM engine, *Fate Of Atlantis* was the company's eighth release. Hitting the shelves in 1992, it followed on from the success of *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* which was produced as a tie-in to the 1989 movie of the same name. Unlike that release, *Fate Of Atlantis* was based on an original premise written by Hal Barwood (assisted by Noel Falstein) who had previously contributed to the scripts of Steven Spielberg's *The Sugarland Express* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. As befitting an *Indiana Jones* release, it leaned heavily into classic mythology.

The story unfolds in 1939 on the eve of World War II. As the opening credits roll and after a humorous slapstick sequence plays out, Indiana Jones and his fellow archeologist Marcus Brody find themselves at gunpoint as a mysterious man insists on stealing a small metal bead freed from inside a horned statue. The man turns out to be a Nazi spy called Klaus Kerner who has a book that links Indy to his former assistant, the aforementioned psychic Sophia Hapgood. This prompts Indy to head for New York City to meet and warn her and so the adventure begins.

Fans of point-and-click adventures are in familiar territory with this game. Players control a cursor to get Indy to move and to interact with various items that are dotted around each location. Items can be picked up, pushed, pulled, opened, handed to characters, looked at and touched, and such actions are chosen by clicking on the nine verbs present at the bottom of the screen. It's also possible to have a conversation with characters. Indeed, this is a fundamental aspect of the game, in line with the genre. It's how information is gathered and, in many cases, how puzzles are solved. Most of the conversations are very lively indeed.

The chemistry between Indy and Sophia is particularly engaging. They'd grown close, romantically so, on an expedition in Iceland in 1929 only for Sophia to steal and sell some of the artefacts they'd unearthed. It turned out, she'd kept a necklace which she believed was once owned by the evil king Nur-Ab-Sal, the high priest and last king of Atlantis and this becomes a pivotal plot device later in the game. It dovetails well with the overarching story which hooks into the legendary island civilisation of Atlantis, first described as a naval empire by Greek philosopher Plato around 360 BCE. In fact, the whole game fully embraces Atlantis mythology which also sees our hero hunt for the Lost Dialogue Of Plato.

Although many of the puzzles need to be solved in a set way, there are exceptions and this becomes clear very early on when trying ▶

» [PC] Some of the puzzles involve some action. A whip is effective against this rodent.

PRESERVED GOOD OLD GAME BY GOG

20% OFF YOUR FIRST GOG PURCHASE USING CODE RETROGOG20

(ONE-TIME USE)

» [PC] Players interact with the game using a cursor, a small selection of verbs and objects both collected and observed.

» [PC] Indy and Sophia can have conversations with a host of characters they meet.

» [PC] There are many ways of getting around the game.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

INDIANA JONES ASIDE, WHO ARE THE KEY CHARACTERS?

SOPHIA HAPGOOD

A former American archeologist-cum-psychic, sharp-tongued Sophia Hapgood may be under the influence of the Atlantean king Nur-Ab-Sal who she says communicates with her via an ancient necklace. She assists Indy in his quest to find the lost city of Atlantis before the Nazis.

ALAIN TROTTIER

Amateur scholar Alain Trottier plays a far larger role in the Wits and Team paths than he does in Fists but this thin-skinned character is still rather memorable. He takes part in a séance with Sophia and has Indy engaging in a car chase to save him. He helps locate the Sunstone.

OMAR AL-JABBAR

Helpful in the Team and Fists paths, Omar Al-Jabbar is an Algerian merchant who provides a map and camels so that our intrepid explorers can find a dig site. In Wits, however, he's antagonistic and obstructive, prompting Indy to lock him in a closet to steal the map and camel.

DR CHARLES STERNHART

An archeologist and antique dealer, Dr Charles Sternhart is more of an opportunist than a villain. When Indy and Sophia discover a tomb inside a pyramid and find a Worldstone, Sternhart decides to steal it and run away. He gets as far as the Labyrinth but appears a changed man.

KLAUS KERNER

Introducing himself as Mr Smith, it soon transpires that the man who steals a metal bead early in the game is actually a gun-toting SS colonel called Klaus Kerner. Desperate to find Atlantis to gain power for the Nazis, he captures Sophia. Things don't go quite as planned for him.

DR HANS UBERMANN

Dr Hans Ubermann is interested in the metal bead stolen by Kerner. It turns out it's made of orichalcum – an energy-rich material which, as it turns out, was used in Atlantis to power machines. Ubermann wants it to power a God Machine believing it'll produce a powerful master race.

CONVERSION CAPERS

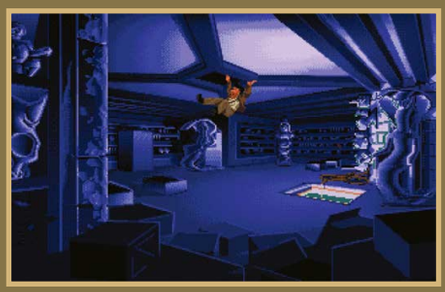
THERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO PLAY THIS GAME

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis was built using LucasArts SCUMM engine, becoming the seventh such release to do so. Released on DOS in 1992, it had standard VGA graphics, allowing for 256 colours, as well as speech in the introductory sequence. It also came on 11 floppy disks.

The Amiga version was much the same. It, too, was released on multiple floppies so a lot of disk-swapping was required but, despite having poorer graphics in comparison to the PC, it remained a faithful conversion.

The same was true of the game on Mac but, as on PC, it benefitted from a CD-ROM version the following year, with 8,000 lines of dialogue (Indy was voiced by Doug Lee) and this is the version available within the Wii title *Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings*. A version for FM Towns with full speech was also released in Japan in 1993 and it's considered to be better than the PC original.

It's also worth mentioning *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis: The Action Game*. Released for DOS, Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC, this was a totally different game loosely based on the point-and-click adventure. It was more combat-focussed and played from an isometric perspective.



» [Amiga] *Fate Of Atlantis* starts with a humorous intro, with Indy bumbling around the archives of Barnett College for a statue.

» [Amstrad CPC] The action version of *Fate Of Atlantis* features a nice isometric viewpoint.

» [PC] The man in a red fez can be tricky to pin down – if you don't say the right things, he's off and you need to find him on the map!

LOST ADVENTURES

THERE WERE TWO SEQUELS THAT SOUNDED GREAT ON PAPER

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis was so successful, it was inevitable LucasArts would begin to discuss another *Indy* game. A sequel called *Indiana Jones And The Iron Phoenix* was planned, with Hal Barwood hired as a story consultant. The plot focussed on using the Philosopher's Stone to resurrect Adolf Hitler two years after the end of World War II.

Development got underway but there were concerns about the game's artistic style. Game designer Aric Wilmunder was also worried the game wasn't meeting LucasArts' high standards. Crucially, the game was shown at the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) in London after 15 months of development. It was pointed out that the game couldn't be sold in Germany, a key market for adventure games, because of the Nazi-focussed content so, fearing huge losses, LucasArts pulled the plug.

The plot ended up being turned into a four-part comic-book series by Dark House but it didn't spell the end of efforts to create another *Fate Of Atlantis* game sequel. According to Hal, a small Canadian studio was hired to create *Indiana Jones And The Spear Of Destiny* based on the Spear Of Longinus – the lance that pierced Jesus' side when he was crucified. With no experience of being able to manage external teams, however, LucasArts decided to drop the development and this, too, ended up being turned into a comic book.

INDY 5: INDIANA JONES AND THE IRON PHOENIX
DESIGN DOCUMENT
10/6/93

STORY SUMMARY

In 1947, Indiana Jones travels to Berlin, to restore damaged relics in the war-battered city. An urgent request from the Soviet sector interrupts his work. The Soviet Ministry of Culture needs help interpreting some ancient Hebrew artifacts. Indy intrigued by the clues the letter provides, but unwilling to subject his research to the Soviet bureaucracy, enters the Soviet sector on his own. Inside a monasteries ruined tower he finds a scroll. It is the legendary Key of Solomon. The scroll speaks of the Philosopher's Stone. The Philosopher's Stone, as described in the arcana of the medieval alchemists, can turn lead to gold and bring the dead to life. And the Key of Solomon tells exactly where to find it.

Indy is hot to pursue the Philosopher's Stone, but the Soviet Ministry's representative, dedicated communist Nadia Kirov, puts him under house arrest. Nadia is pursuing certain enemies of the state. She cannot risk the interference of an adventuresome archaeologist.

Indy, of course, escapes. He picks up the trail of the Stone, and soon discovers who Nadia is pursuing. A group of ex-Nazis is prowling the dark corners of postwar Europe, and they too seek the Stone. Nadia wants to destroy this remnant of Hitler's cult. She's an agent of the Soviet Secret Police, a professional Nazi hunter.

Indy is swept into the struggle between Nadia and her Nazi prey. Only sharp wits and quick fists keep him from being crushed between the two ruthless organizations. When the Nazis gain the upper hand, Indy and Nadia join forces. They race to South America, where a fugitive Nazi doctor intends to use the Philosopher's Stone to resurrect his evil lord, Adolph Hitler. Together Indy and Nadia fight against the return of Hitler and his Reich.

STORY DETAIL

Berlin 1947, Soviet Sector.

» A 67-page design document was written for *Iron Phoenix* in 1993.

GLOBE TROTTER

INDIANA AND SOPHIA DON'T HALF GET AROUND

ICELAND

Iceland is where Sophia Hapgood previously found Nur-Ab-Sal's necklace. In *Fate Of Atlantis*, Indiana Jones and Sophia Hapgood fly from New York to Iceland to visit a dig site and they meet archeologist Bjorn Heimdall who is looking for Atlantean artefacts. He's in the process of excavating a device resembling an eel.

TIKAL

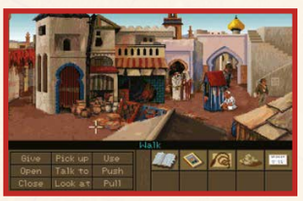
This ancient Mayan city is where Indy and Sophia first encounter Dr Charles Sternhart, having made their way through a jungle towards the temple where he's working. The intrepid explorers find a bead of orichalcum here – the same metal that sparked the Nazi's interest in Atlantis where there is said to be a plentiful supply.

THE AZORES

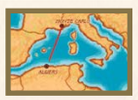
Indy and Sophia make a brief stop in the lush surroundings of The Azores, a Portuguese archipelago in the North Atlantic that is made up of nine volcanic islands. Far from being given a warm welcome, Indy meets with a distinctly frosty Felipe Costa – who he soon discovers would be far more interested in talking to Sophia.

MONTE CARLO

Indy (and Sophia) will find themselves in the luxury surroundings of one of Monaco's finest administrative areas and, depending on the chosen path, gain access to a classy hotel room. Monte Carlo is where Indy obtains the Sunstone and goes round in circles trying to find a specific street's location.



ALGERIA



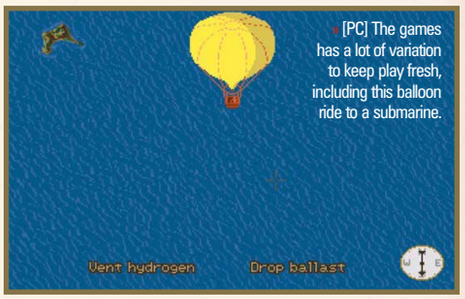
There's a visit to the Mediterranean capital Algiers in order to find Omar Al-Jabbar and, if Sophia is accompanying Indy, she's going to have to volunteer to be a knife thrower's assistant. The main focus, however, is on getting to a dig site in the middle of a desert then stabbing around in the dark to make progress.

ATLANTIS

Indy and Sophia finally make it to Atlantis but they find the Nazis have got there first. Our heroes end up going round in circles exploring the Lost City – quite literally as the metropolis is made up of three rings of various sizes, each one packed with rooms to explore and enemies to avoid. Once at the inner ring, the compelling finale is close.

» [PC] Indy changes his clothes so as not to arouse suspicion while he's on the submarine.

» [PC] When traversing the desert looking for a dig site, you need to bribe any officials you encounter.



» [PC] The games has a lot of variation to keep play fresh, including this balloon ride to a submarine.

to meet Sophia who is onstage in a sold-out theatre. Indy can't buy a ticket so he looks for another way in, encountering a doorman called Biff. Indy is able to sweet talk Biff into allowing his access. He is also able to move some crates and sneak in through the fire exit. But there's a third way. He can trash talk Biff to the point where the doorman wants a fight.

"THE CINEMATIC STORYTELLING IS SO GOOD, IT COULD EASILY FORM THE BASIS OF A MOVIE"

Combat is simple enough. Each opponent gets a power bar and health bar and the trick is to strike when the power bar is sufficiently full and avoid getting hit (which reduces health). It's possible to block, step back and punch high, middle or low and there's a sucker punch option too.

The fighting element adds another dimension to the game and leans into Indy's penchant for a punch-up when required. But the fact that players don't have to engage in fisticuffs ensures traditional adventurists can remain comfortable. It ensures the game tailors for different tastes.

Players nail this choice early-ish in the game. Having globe-trotted to Iceland, Tikal and The Azores, encountering English archeologist and antique dealer Charles Sternhart and grumpy womaniser Felipe Costa along the way, Indy and Sophia talk over their findings in Indy's office at Barnett College. Players can then decide to allow Sophia to accompany Indy (the Team path), go it alone (the Wits path) or increase the number of foes Indy will have to fight with (the Fists path). Each branching path offers different puzzles and methods of play and there is an incentive to go back and try each one once the game is complete thanks to the inclusion of IQ Points.

Short for Indy Quotient, these points are amassed for carrying out certain actions such as distracting the stage hand, moving a totem pole, obtaining camels and opening secret doors. The only way to achieve a maximum 1,000 IQ points is to play all three paths and, because of the way the game is structured, you'll need to play those paths at least a couple of times too. That's no mean feat when an average play through can keep you occupied for many hours. Regardless of the path taken, though, each rejoins the story ahead of Act III which marks the big push towards the end.

It's clear a lot of time and attention was paid to this game over its two years in development. There's an abundance of exotic locations and intriguing characters together with logical puzzles as well as some creative sequences. These will have you chasing around the streets following servant Paul Abdul to Omar Al-Jabbar's house (or looking to pin down a man wearing a fez). They'll see you on camelback looking for a dig site while avoiding bribe-receptive officers and getting directions from nomads and they'll see you chasing round the streets of Monte Carlo seeking to ram a car full of Nazis to rescue amateur scholar Alain Trotter.

You'll end up dashing around trying to find a street corner or stabbing around in pitch-black darkness feeling around for objects. There's a balloon ride that takes you to a submarine where you'll fire a torpedo. You'll need to pick up a trio of stones and put them on a pedestal so you can turn them to make things happen. And you'll need to make your way through a labyrinth as well as around Atlantis itself – the latter being no mean feat because you're essentially charging around three rings, entering rooms, solving puzzles and meeting dead ends. *Fate Of Atlantis* is certainly a challenge.

It also holds up well today. Although the graphics have inevitably dated, they still manage to sparkle and that is helped enormously by the rotoscoping technique used to animate Indy and Sophia. The cinematic storytelling is also so good, it could easily form the basis of a movie but then it is clear the game's developers fully understood what makes Indiana Jones so appealing. On that basis, it's no surprise that it sold more than a million copies. ✱

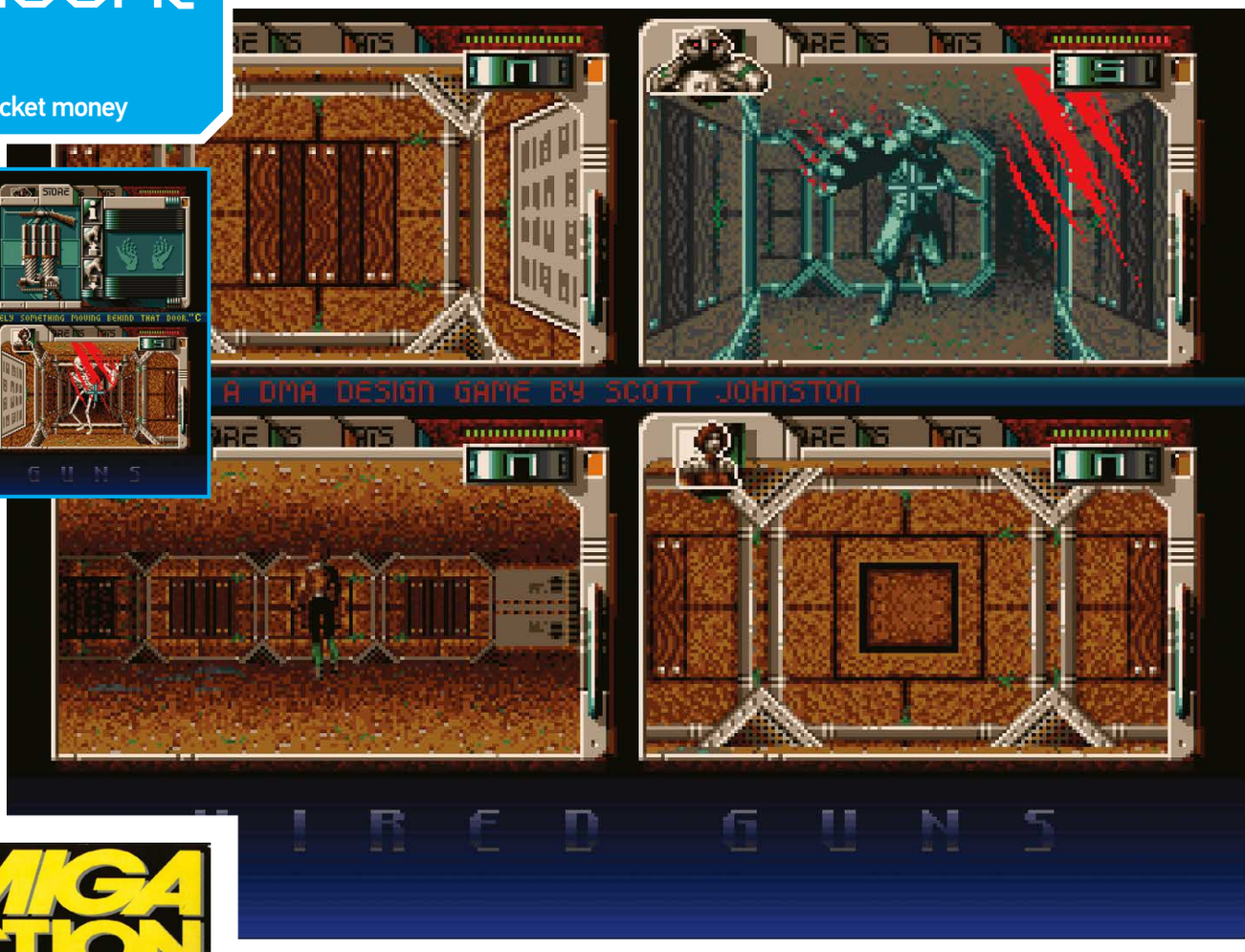
» [PC] The solution to some of the puzzles, including this stone-based one, can change each time you play.

» [PC] The fights are rather basic but there can be fatal consequences so be careful.

Covermount Corner

The best way to spend your pocket money

» [Amiga] Teamwork is key in *Hired Guns*, but if your team is under pressure it's easy to get overwhelmed.



» [Amiga] Helpfully, the battle droid can't drown, but there are baddies in the water, too.

AMIGA ACTION #45

COVERDISKS OFTEN COMBINED HEAVYWEIGHT TITLES WITH SMALLER PUBLIC DOMAIN GAMES AND THESE WERE A GREAT WAY TO BUILD YOUR COLLECTION. THIS MONTH'S DISKS INCLUDE A SMATTERING OF PD GAMES ALONGSIDE DEMOS OF A SLIGHTLY OVERLOOKED SCI-FI DUNGEON CRAWLER, AND AN UNUSUAL PLATFORMER

WORDS BY JAMES KONIK

THIS MONTH IN JUNE 1993

The Amiga scene was thriving at this point, with classic titles arriving all the time. The A1200 was out, and *Amiga Action* magazine mentioned rumours of a CD-based console from Commodore. There was also a feature on CompuServe, for those interested in trying the internet.

On the coverdisks, *Hired Guns* was the standout, an excellent demo of a ground-breaking game. With it was quirky platformer *Donk* and a collection of public domain games.

A few months later *Doom* would launch, heralding a shift in power away from the Amiga, but this month's big demo pushed many of the same buttons.

» [Amiga] Your squad can follow each other about, or try to.

THE MAIN EVENT: HIRED GUNS DEMO

DMA had a busy 1993 and after the original shooter *Walker*, and expansive sequel *Lemmings 2* came *Hired Guns*. Launching several months before *Doom*, Scott Johnston's high-octane take on the dungeon crawler formula felt quietly revolutionary.

Fast and tense, it equips its futuristic squad of fighters with a fierce arsenal of weapons, complete with beefy sound effects. There's a thunderous assault rifle and it briefly featured the best shotgun in gaming.

Set in 2707, you control a band of four fugitives, who banter as you play, providing atmosphere and context. The demo is a training exercise undertaken before the game proper, simulating the planet Graveyard ahead of your mission to wipe out a facility producing illegally bio-engineered organisms.

Naturally, a small army of these beasties is out to stop you, and you'll hear them hatching from their eggs as you play, adding a grim urgency to proceedings. As well as fighting your way past them, you've also got to solve puzzles and figure out how to make your way through the game's sprawling corridors.

The four-way split-screen gives each character their own window into the world. Some puzzles require teamwork, such as one

» [Amiga] You've got several special powers, and turning into an egg renders the enemies harmless.

» [Amiga] Enemies hatch from eggs. Keep up a decent pace and you can blast them before they hatch.

person flipping a switch while someone else uses a lift. The combat is the big draw though, with enemies closing on you swiftly, meaning you always need to be ready to fire back. Enemies wander freely round the level, so you can never let your guard down.

The demo is massive and more than enough to justify the price of the magazine purchase by itself. There's also a two-player mode if you're lucky enough to have two mice. *Hired Guns* was something special, and it's still worth a look today.

PLAY THIS NEXT: DONK DEMO

Wisely renamed after appearing as *Dong* on other coverdisks, *Donk* is a samurai duck on a mission to gather magical gems before the nefarious Eider Down can use them for mischief.

Creators The Hidden, founded by Craig Howard, had developed coverdisk games before, but *Donk*, a side-scrolling platformer, was its only commercial release.

The demo includes one of the game's many levels, set in the Observatory Zone. Slickly presented, with demoscene-like music and its own sense of humour, *Donk* has some nice touches. Some iffy collision detection makes picking up diamonds troublesome, but doesn't stop *Donk* being an entertaining game, and an enjoyable, challenging demo. ✱

» [Amiga] There are lots of diamonds, and you need to find them all to unlock the exit in *Donk*.

Covermount HIGHLIGHTS

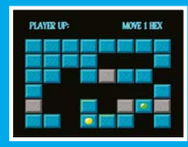
THE BEST OF THE REST

CRAZY SUE

■ This is a wickedly difficult public domain platformer, by Hironymus Jumpshoe, Thorin Oakenshield and DJ Braincrack, with banging music, and decent graphics.

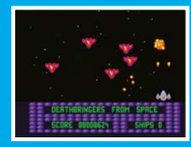
As the prophesied child with a blue key, you're exploring the land of Ereanor in search of an evil wizard. You saunter along the levels, dodging the unpredictable baddies while collecting bonuses and power-ups. Mad and original, it's very, very challenging, but a likeable diversion and a real test of your platforming skills.

ISOLATION



■ In this two-player strategy game by Bode, you have to move around the map, removing tiles and attempting to isolate your opponent, who is trying to do the same to you. It looks simple, but it's surprisingly deep, and games can take a turn quickly.

DEATHBRINGERS FROM SPACE

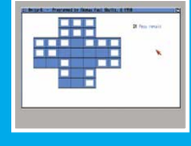


■ This is a zappy space shooter by Ego The Avatar, where you fight through waves of colourful enemies. It's certainly simple stuff, but the intro music is nice, and it includes a built-in infinite lives mode.

ASSAULT

■ A mouse-based PD shooting gallery that gives you little time to hit even the first tiny target. Made by Arno 'Sigh' Jellema of De Bond while serving in the Dutch army, you'll need extraordinarily fast reflexes for this one.

AMIGA-Q



■ *Amiga-Q* is a *Solitaire* game, by Thomas Paul Shultz. You jump across pins to remove them, and try to carry on doing so until there's just one left. It also includes a cheeky cheat mode option. This is a very nice game to have in your collection.

THE MAKING OF COMMAND & CONQUER RENEGADE™

WITH THE 1995 RELEASE OF COMMAND & CONQUER, WESTWOOD STUDIOS CREATED AN INSTANT CLASSIC THAT WOULD CHANGE THE WORLD OF REAL-TIME STRATEGY FOREVER. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, THE SAME THING WAS TO HAPPEN AGAIN, ONLY THIS TIME WITH A FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER. WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE MUCH MORE COMPLICATED...

WORDS BY PAUL KAUTZ

Westwood Studios may not have invented the real-time strategy genre with the release of *Dune II* in 1992, but it clearly defined it and brought it to the masses. The competition, led by the well-armed Blizzard Orcs, came, saw and built upon it. So Westwood had to step it up a notch to maintain its dominance. Which it did in abundance with *Command & Conquer*. Not only was it a fantastic RTS in its own right that cleverly expanded on the gameplay mechanics of *Dune II*, but it was also a huge hit that continued to grow in 1996's *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*.

Both games featured dedicated missions in which heavily armed lone wolf fighters were let loose. It made sense for Westwood to give these commando units their own game, as executive producer Dan Cermak confirmed to us. "*C&C* was a huge IP and the commando was one of the favourite units in the game. So it seemed natural to try to move to another genre while hopefully pulling in a sizeable audience that knew and loved the character."

Louis Castle, cofounder of Westwood and also executive producer on *Command & Conquer: Renegade*, elaborates further, "We always viewed *C&C* as a world where many games could be played. We especially liked the idea of playing first/third-person as one of our hero commando characters. *Renegade* and *Sole Survivor* were both ideas of how our players might control a single unit but be part of the greater real-time strategy that was authentically *C&C*."

After some experimentation with the genre-typical bird's-eye view, Westwood turned to the first-person perspective. A tech demo developed in mid-1997 on the first PlayStation was called *Command & Conquer: Commando* and consisted of rotating real-time 3D objects and an animation test, all based on the 3D engine of the racing game *Sports Car GT*, which was also in development at the time by publisher Electronic Arts. However, this quickly proved to be too inflexible, so Westwood decided that a customised 3D system had to be developed. The result was called W3D, which stood for Westwood 3D, and was later renamed SAGE and used in games such as *Command & Conquer: Generals* (2003) and *The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-Earth* (2004).

> "WE ALWAYS VIEWED C&C AS A WORLD WHERE MANY GAMES COULD BE PLAYED"
> **LOUIS CASTLE**

However, its first appearance was in the game that was announced in a press release by Westwood on 15 September 1999. "*C&C*: *Renegade* puts players directly on the *Command & Conquer* battlefield as the Commando, the one-man army made famous in the original *Command & Conquer* strategy game. Instead of commanding troops from afar, you'll be on the battlefield,

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **DEVELOPER:** WESTWOOD STUDIOS
- **PLATFORM:** PC
- **RELEASED:** 2002
- **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA
PLATFORM: PC, AMIGA
RELEASED: 1992

LANDS OF LORE: THE THRONE OF CHAOS (PICTURED)
PLATFORM: PC
RELEASED: 1993

COMMAND & CONQUER
PLATFORM: PC, VARIOUS
RELEASED: 1995

» [PC] The game's levels offer a remarkable amount of variety.

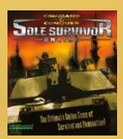
in the middle of the war." The same press release stated that the game was scheduled for release in spring 2000 – which did not happen. The game was postponed again and again and again, with Westwood even making fun of itself. In a four-and-a-half-minute video called *Havoc Takes On Westwood* (youtu.be/p5ZF0PCTwEI), released in November 2001, hero Nick Parker (played by Andrew Bryniarski, whom gaming fans will know best as Zangief from the 1994 *Street Fighter* film) runs furiously through the Westwood offices, to make sure the game isn't delayed any further. "You ship on time, or I'll be back!" he shouts at the very end of the funny clip. It didn't help though, the game was still not released until spring 2002.

According to lead game designer David Yee (who also appears in the video), there were many reasons for the significant delay. "It took a long time for the team and studio to figure out and agree how the game should play and what the tone would be. Once decisions were made to answer these questions, we needed more time to finish acceptable assets for the time we were releasing." According to Dan, there was also a lack of vision as well as technical issues. "I don't think there was a clear path for what the player should be doing and what it meant to be the Commando. When I got there, the team was demoralised and there really wasn't a product plan, but the game was supposed to ship that year. The art assets were very good but too much for the engine, and we had to simplify most of it. We reworked the narrative and it felt like we started from scratch in a lot of areas. I do remember having to demo the game to EA Studio execs on a regular basis and it took a ton of team focus to set those demos ▶

» [PlayStation] *Renegade* began life as a very simple tech demo on the original PlayStation.

SURVIVAL OF THE SINGLEST

HOW C&C WENT SOLO BEFORE



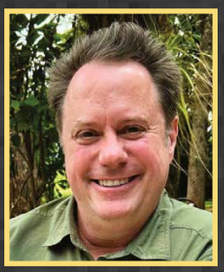
Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor Online, released at the end of 1997, is the third and now largely forgotten game in the *C&C* series. Visually, it was very reminiscent of the first game, but it focussed on online multiplayer, in an unusual way: each of the up to 50 players per map (in 1997!) controlled exactly one unit and engaged in deathmatch-like battles against the others, either alone or in teams. There were 23 different units and lots of upgrades hidden in crates that had to be found on the large maps. Ultimately, the game boiled down to a kind of last man standing – whoever was left at the end or had the most points after the time limit expired, won the round.

It sounds like a great idea at first, but unfortunately plays very sluggishly and is simply quite boring. The game mostly received only average ratings and was anything but a sales hit. The official servers were shut down in early 2002, and the game never found its way onto any of the *Command & Conquer* collections released over the years. It may have its fans (who have been trying to revive its online functionality since 2022), but it is generally considered one of the blackest sheep of the *C&C* family.

» [PC] *Sole Survivor* had no campaign and no base building, only multiplayer battles online.

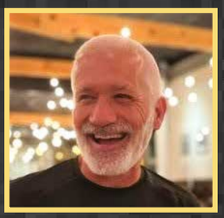
DAVID YEE

David was the lead game designer for *Command & Conquer: Renegade*. After his time at Westwood, he spent many years at Electronic Arts and Oculus VR. Since 2022, he has been COO at VR game developer Another Axiom.



LOUIS CASTLE

Louis was one of the founders of Westwood Studios and executive producer of *Renegade*. After Westwood, he was vice president of creative development at Electronic Arts for many years and is now a freelance consultant.



DAN CERMAK

Dan was also executive producer of *Renegade*. He then spent many years in senior management at Volition and now works as both a consultant and teacher for game design.

» [PC] Nick occasionally has to deal with helicopters as enemies. Unfortunately, flying them yourself is not permitted in the campaign.

COMMAND & COMRADE

HOW THE PLANNED RENEGADE SEQUEL NEVER CAME TO BE

Immediately after work on *Renegade* was completed, the developers turned to a sequel, as Louis confirms. "We rarely built a new IP without a notion of how we would expand it. In the case of *Renegade*, we talked about moving into the *Red Alert* universe to follow the path of the original *C&C* games."

Renegade 2 (which had the working subtitle *Battlegrounds*) would have used an advanced W3D engine to tell a new story in the popular *Red Alert* scenario. The hero would not have been Havoc again, instead players would have fought their way through the dark world in the role of a renegade Soviet commander, using vehicles and weapons typical of the scenario.

However, *Renegade 2* never made it past the preproduction phase. Publisher Electronic Arts had more confidence in the recently released *Battlefield 1942* and did not want to release two similar games at the same time. Dan regrets this in hindsight, "I find that with a new IP, the first game isn't usually the best of the series. The second is when the team has a real knowledge of the tech and tools and a much clearer understanding of what the IP is about. We pitched a sequel that, if we had done it, would have felt more like *C&C* from a first/third-person perspective. We wanted to allow the player to command units rather than just be one character. The team was really excited to do it, but the sales just didn't support a second game."

» [PC] *Renegade 2* was supposed to be set in the dark world of *Red Alert*

» [PC] The standard enemies are very simple and only pose a threat due to their sheer numbers.

up. The team would fly in and we would show the progress and discuss things. I feel like it took too much time away from the dev process but the discussions were very useful." Last but not least, the sheer size of the game was also a problem, as Louis recalls. "It just took longer than expected to get to a high-quality, high-performance game with the large open battlefields we wanted to represent. *Renegade* was a very ambitious game in terms of both technology and design. A few times we got pretty close to a release date but felt we needed to make things a bit better."

***Renegade* was Westwood's first foray into the world of first-person shooters.** Of course, the 30 or so developers involved in the project were fans of the genre, with Dan citing games such as *Medal Of Honor*, *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike* as important inspirations. But none of them had any real experience developing such a game, which, according to David, caused many internal struggles. "In my opinion, one of the most challenging things about *Renegade*

» [PC] Havoc can also drive some enemy vehicles, including the beautifully destructive Flame Tank.

» [PC] Some of the rare boss fights are quite challenging.

» [PC] Most buildings can be entered, seamlessly transitioning between the outside and inside.

was working at a studio that did not play or appreciate the FPS genre. I've been lucky to also get to work on the *Battlefield* franchise where we had a core pillar that focussed on the experience of movement, vehicles, using weapons and tools. When working on *Renegade*, building compelling FPS features was universally dismissed in favour of trying to appeal to the core *C&C* RTS audience first – where this might be their first-ever FPS."

Westwood's focus on targeting its original player base proved a frustrating issue, as David continues. "It was a choice in game direction that made it hard to advocate for features that I would consider table stakes for an FPS, like weapon firing animations, decals or tracers, everything became a discussion about how our potential audience wouldn't care about these details. The art team was directed to make things more cartoonish. The Nod light tank that we originally made as a more realistic-looking tank became the brightly coloured thing that we shipped with. At one point in development, buildings did not take damage and could not be destroyed. C4 did not work unless you placed it exactly on the consoles. To the team's credit, everything changed once we got multiplayer working. That was really the turning point once we got into daily play sessions and people took it upon themselves to advocate for something that resembled what an RTS game would look like at ground level."

» [PC] Later in the game, Nick reunites his old team, the Dead 6, who then fight independently alongside him.

» [PC] Nick 'Havoc' Parker, hero of *Command & Conquer: Renegade*, in all his smouldering glory.

» [PC] Most of the vehicles can be used, dealing out a lot of firepower and giving Havoc a moment to breathe.

> **"C&C WAS A HUGE IP AND THE COMMANDO WAS A FAN FAVOURITE"**
> **DAN CERMAK**

According to the game's manual, *Renegade* is set at the end of the first Tiberium War between the GDI (Global Defence Initiative) and the sinister Brotherhood Of Nod, which kidnaps three leading Tiberium researchers in order to turn the tide of war in its favour. They can only be freed by one man: Nick Seymour Parker, codename Havoc. According to David, the reason for the lone wolf centre was primarily a desire to diversify. "Westwood always had a spirit of experimentation with the franchise, including games like *Sole Survivor* (see the Survival Of The Singlest panel). The idea behind *Renegade* was to imagine what the universe would be like from a very different perspective." The original plan included the choice to play the campaign from the perspective of the Brotherhood Of Nod as well, but according to Louis, this was not possible due to time constraints, "Originally it was both GDI & Nod, just like in the original game. However, we reduced scope to just GDI fairly early on when we realised it would be just too ambitious to try and build out two campaigns to the level of quality we were shooting for."

The campaign, consisting of 12 missions, is divided into primary, secondary and occasionally even tertiary objectives: Havoc must free prisoners, eliminate enemies, reunite his old combat unit Dead 6, flee from a nuclear missile, escape from prison, and protect people on several occasions. As the whole game is deeply rooted in the *C&C* universe, he also has to deal with Tiberium Harvesters, deadly Obelisks and the Hand Of Nod, all of which feature familiar-looking energy bars, and are accompanied by ▶

» [PC] There are plenty of references to *Command & Conquer*: Overview maps, Tiberium Harvesters and, of course, legendary buildings like the Obelisk.

» [PC] Letting a Flame Tank get this close is a bad idea. But with the right weapon, it'll still become scrap metal quite quickly.

familiar sound effects. Not to mention the EVA (Electronic Video Agent) menu system, the bird's-eye perspective overview map and the ever-present Tiberium fields.

Havoc fights his enemies not only on foot, but also at the wheel of a Humvee, a Light Tank or even a mighty Mammoth Tank! Many of the vehicles standing around in the environment or being carried into view by transport helicopters are fully usable and very easy to control. According to the original press release, even more were planned, most notably flying units such as Orca helicopters, but these had to be cut from the campaign due to time constraints.

> "EVERYTHING CHANGED ONCE WE GOT MULTIPLAYER WORKING"
> **DAVID YEE**

In addition, the existing vehicles do not always behave as we know them from previous games, which according to David was an intentional decision. "One of the most controversial decisions I made was the balance of the Stealth Tank and the Flame Tank. Specifically, going against *C&C* canon and giving them increased movement speed. In the RTS, especially the Flame Tank, these vehicles are superpowerful but fairly slow, relying on a sense of impending doom or stealth to be effective. In our playtests, they just became useless and too easy to pick off with other units. Making that change is not what you would see in the RTS, but I think it added a modern element that fit the FPS game better." It was definitely worth it – *Renegade* is a *Command & Conquer* game through and through!

Unfortunately, this is also true of its drawbacks. Anyone familiar with the original RTS is sure to be familiar with the infamously stupid Tiberium Harvesters. In *Renegade*, this role falls to the regular enemies, as their AI is practically non-existent for the most part: they tend to run blindly towards the player, without tactics or finesse. You can easily take out individual enemies from a group without the others giving any care, and most enemy vehicles can be safely destroyed from a distance with a few missiles – the biggest danger to Havoc actually comes from snipers and Flame Tanks.

Dan mentions with a smirk that this at least gave players the feeling of being a truly overpowered hero. Who is, typical for the *Command & Conquer* series, accompanied by a thunderous soundtrack written by Westwood maestro Frank Klepacki. David still remembers it very fondly, "I do want to take a moment and call out Frank's awesome music for the game. *Mechanical Man* was one of my favourite original songs and I thought it fit the spirit of a *C&C* game where you play as a character. Seeing/hearing that Frank did an updated version for *Renegade* was a career highlight. I still have the soundtrack on CD."

» [PC] *Renegade* offers an extensive arsenal of weapons that can be used to wreak great chaos.

» [PC] Even at the time of release, the graphics weren't the game's strong point.

» [PC] The battles are simple, but usually look cool and are a lot of fun.

» *Havoc Takes On Westwood* was a short video released in late-2001, in which Westwood themselves poked fun at the game's constant delays.

After that very long development time, *Renegade* was supposed to be the first of many first-person shooters in the *Command & Conquer* universe. But, alas, that was not to be, as the very average sales figures told a different story, as Louis sighs. "*Renegade* underperformed against high expectations. One of the great things about being part of a big company is that you have incredible resources to build and promote games. One of the key difficulties is that you are competing with all the other great franchises for the same limited pools of investment dollars. The storyline and single-player of *Renegade* were okay, but didn't measure up to games like *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*. I do like the IP and wish we could have revisited the genre with a stronger investment in the core technology and an emphasis on the multiplayer game." A planned console version never came to be, nor did a planned sequel (see the Command & Comrade panel). And so *Renegade* remains the only first-person shooter in the *C&C* universe to date.

Which is a real shame. Because despite all its drawbacks, such as average graphics and weak enemy AI, *Renegade* also got a lot of things right: Its integration into the *C&C* universe was exemplary, the action had a lot of oomph, and the online mode was a masterpiece (more on that in the The Threedeerium Conflict panel). David still has nothing but fond memories of it. "*C&C* Mode is one of my favourite things I've worked on. I think we did a decent job of capturing what it would feel like to play an RTS as an FPS for the time." ✱

THE THREEDEERIUM CONFLICT

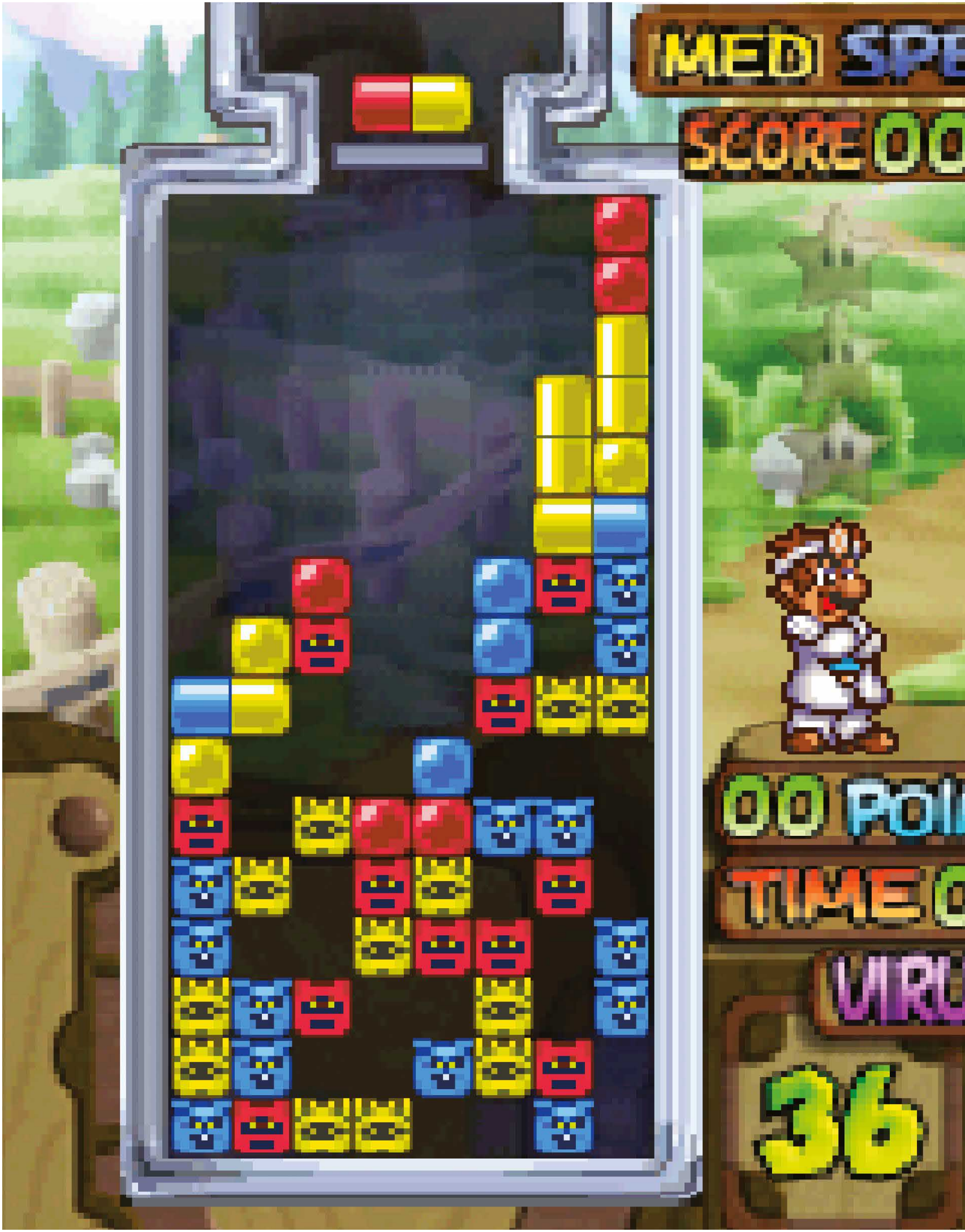
WHY RENEGADES MULTIPLAYER MODE WAS SO SPECIAL

Renegade's multiplayer mode (called C&C Mode) is basically a game of classic *Command & Conquer* – only from a first-person perspective and with significantly more action. On the GDI or Nod side, you work as a team (originally a maximum of 32 players, later up to 128) to destroy your opponents' base. Tiberium Harvesters bring in money that can be used to buy equipment, weapons and vehicles. It's great fun that fans kept alive over all these years and still play it today.

Its development presented some unexpected problems, as David remembers. "For multiplayer, we really struggled with how to integrate super weapons. But how could you not have an ion cannon or nuke? We also took a lot of inspiration from *Counter-Strike* with placing and defusing the bomb to come up with the concept of the beacons. My favourite line from a review of the game described the feeling of being on the battlefield getting hit with an ion cannon as watching the middle finger of God."

Looking back, Louis regrets the development focus of *Renegade*. "I wish we had started with the multiplayer mode and then built more single-player levels that leaned into all the fun of base defence and assault. I think the multiplayer of *Renegade* really broke new ground and should have been the focus rather than trying to teach players about shooters."

» [PC] In multiplayer mode, you have a free choice of characters and vehicles – as long as you have the money to buy them.


MED SPE
SCORE 00
00 POI
TIME
VIRU
36

Dr Mario 64

FAMILY DRAMA

» NINTENDO 64 » 2001 » NINTENDO R&D1

Although I've recently sold off my entire Game Boy Advance collection and a large amount of my SNES collection, my N64 games aren't going anywhere.

In some ways it represents two distinct sides of me, the carefree idiot I was before I had kids and the carefree idiot I became afterwards. Before my first daughter Emily came along, the N64 was a constant part of my life. If I wasn't playing *Ocarina Of Time* or *Banjo-Kazooie*, I was having multiplayer sessions of *GoldenEye 007*, *Turok 2* or *Mario Kart 64* with friends. Even Mel used to love Nintendo's console, and when she wasn't staring at her character's feet in *GoldenEye*, she'd be using a guide and helping me through whatever game I was playing.

With the imminent arrival of Emily, I sold my entire N64 collection because I knew it was time to grow up. Alongside swapping my original NTSC SNES for an Amiga 1200, it's the biggest gaming mistake I ever made. I rectified this error around five years ago when I looked at rebuying all those games I'd foolishly sold off because I naively thought that being a parent meant becoming a completely different person.

The new N64 became a hit, particularly with my younger daughter Alice. She enjoyed playing *Mario Party 2*, *GoldenEye* and *Super Mario Kart 64* with me, and even Mel started to play the odd session of *Gauntlet Legends* – one of the few games we completed together back in the day. She even played some *GoldenEye* (she's still terrible at it).

The arrival of the Analogue^{3D} has made multiplayer gaming even more appealing to my family now, as we can play N64 games together in the front room on a big TV. We don't get together very often as Alice is in uni and Emily is too cool to play games, but I picked up *Dr Mario 64* recently because I've heard very good things about its multiplayer.

The few games I've played highlight that it's not really doing much mechanically over the earlier games in the series, but it does come with a large number of different game modes, which I'm looking forward to getting stuck into.

It's the four-player multiplayer mode that really drew me towards buying the game however and I'm really looking forward to experiencing it with the rest of the family when we're all under one roof again. ✱

SPIDER-

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH
- **PLATFORM:** PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE
- **RELEASED:** 2004
- **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X
PLATFORM: XBOX
RELEASED: 2001

CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR
PLATFORM: PS3, XBOX 360, WII, PC
RELEASED: 2008

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS (PICTURED)
PLATFORM: VARIOUS
RELEASED: 2010

SPIDER-MAN 2 IS STILL WIDELY REGARDED AS ONE OF THE BEST SUPERHERO GAMES EVER MADE. AT THE TIME, IT WAS REVOLUTIONARY. THE OPEN-WORLD SETTING, INNOVATIVE CONTROL SYSTEM AND INTENSE WEB-SWINGING ACTION DEVELOPED BY TREYARCH ALL LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

WORDS BY SEAN COLE

SPIDER-MAN 2™ THE GAME

Treyarch's original *Spider-Man* game lacked something. It was solidly made, and enjoyable enough to play, but failed to replicate the visceral thrill of hurtling through New York as a web-slinging superhero. It didn't capture the freedom, speed and fluidity of movement that makes Spider-Man so compelling.

Jamie Fristrom, one of Treyarch's first employees and a key member of the development team, had been away on his honeymoon when work started on *Spider-Man*, which was based around the first instalment of the Sam Raimi trilogy. Jamie returned to the office to find that his colleagues had embarked down a different path to the one he envisaged.

Webs were essentially cosmetic and players could swing continuously from one to another, regardless of whether they attached to anything or not. They didn't respond to your momentum either, carrying you along at the same steady pace regardless of circumstance.

Jamie felt that the web-swinging experience wasn't anywhere near dynamic or immersive enough. It also made *Spider-Man* too easy, depriving the game of the necessary speed and peril. "I was pretty disappointed by that, but I also knew that doing something more 'realistic', with physics and grappling hooks, where you actually attach to stuff, was probably not going to fly," he says. "But, during the development of that game, I did work late to cobble together my own ideas. About six months into production, I'd got something that I liked and I showed it around the team. They thought it was interesting and had potential."

That initial discussion with team members gave Jamie the confidence to push his idea further. "I talked to the owners of Treyarch – my college buddies – and said, 'Here, look what I did.' They were like, 'Come on, Jamie, be reasonable. You can't change the core game mechanic halfway through!' It also wasn't quite there yet. You'd swing and you'd stick to a wall automatically, because Spider-Man was pretty sticky back then. That wasn't fun."

Treyarch decided to continue with the initial plan and put Jamie's ideas to one side, at least temporarily. After the game was released in 2002, the development team went to watch *Spider-Man* in the cinema for the first time, an experience which changed everything. Spellbound by the film's sheer

> "If you feel it strongly enough, getting there is just a matter of work. And we were excited enough that we didn't care how much work it would take"
>
> **TOMO MORIWAKI**

» [PlayStation 2] The tilted camera shows Spider-Man venturing to the top of the Empire State Building.

» [PlayStation 2] Rhino, the first major villain that Spider-Man faces, getting ready to charge at him.

» [PlayStation 2] Spider-Man takes an injured woman to the hospital in a time-limited challenge.

JAMIE FRISTROM

■ In recent years, *Spider-Man 2*'s technical director and designer has been improving the experience of network games on *Minecraft: Bedrock Edition*.

TOMO MORIWAKI

■ The game's creative director is now chief creative officer of Hyperkinetic Studios and a lecturer at the ArtCenter College Of Design.

» [PlayStation 2] Beating Quentin Beck in a challenge to round up prisoners and prove Spider-Man's credentials.

» [PlayStation 2] Swinging between trees in Central Park, one of the game's many iconic locations.

"It's probably one of the most difficult core game mechanics that you can dump in somebody's lap and say, 'Here, learn this!' I was nervous as we were shipping the final thing"

JAMIE FRISTROM

dynamism, they recognised that a more ambitious approach would be needed to ensure the sequel lived up to heightened expectations. "Maybe we still didn't know what to do next, but we knew exactly where we were heading. Now we could do iteration after iteration. If you feel it strongly enough, getting there is just a matter of work. And we were excited enough that we didn't care how much work it would take," says Tomo Moriwaki, the game's creative director.

Soon after *Spider-Man* shipped, the next game was underway. Treyarch had two years to deliver *Spider-Man 2* and spent the first six months of that in preproduction, refining Jamie's prototype. "We had this period where we had one team working on gameplay and controls and character and how the camera would work, and then another team working on the tech," he explains.

"In today's world, with the kind of budgets that would be in place for a game like that now, it's unreasonable. Our bosses would have stopped us," says Tomo. "But, at the time, there was more distance between publisher and developer, and even the leaders of the development company. We were given a wider berth."

There was no guarantee that all this experimentation would deliver the results they wanted, causing a lot of anxiety. "There were several months of us telling our bosses, like, 'Don't look at it yet! Don't look at it yet!' That moment came where we couldn't hold them off anymore," recalls Jamie. "That was a great day for us because they were all very impressed. They ran it all the way up the chain to the chief operating officer of Activision to show everybody what we'd done."

The new fluid style of web-swinging, in which Spider-Man would latch onto a building, lamppost, tree or other structure and pivot like a pendulum, was given resounding approval. The more attachment points that were added, the smoother the experience became. You

CONVERSION CAPERS

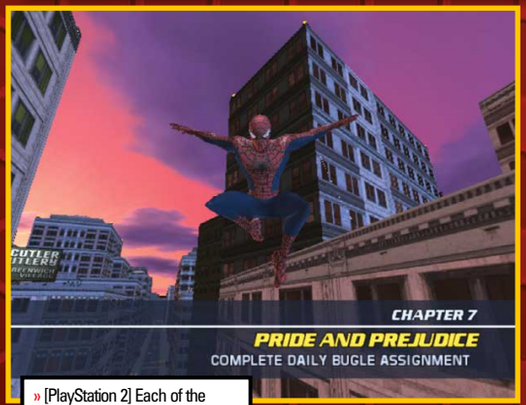
OTHER DEVELOPERS STRUGGLED TO FIND THE RIGHT FORMULA

While Treyarch were responsible for the acclaimed console version of *Spider-Man 2*, its best features – dynamic web-swinging, non-linear gameplay and freedom to roam – were sadly lacking from the games made for other platforms, leaving some players feeling misled.

The Fizz Factor, a branch of Amaze Entertainment that specialised in delivering licensed games on a budget, made the PC version. Targeted at a younger audience, it was criticised for being simplistic and clunky, especially the web-swinging and fighting elements.

Vicarious Visions, now known as Blizzard Albany, fared better when developing *Spider-Man 2* for the Nintendo DS and PlayStation Portable. On the PSP, the style of gameplay was very similar to Treyarch's original *Spider-Man*, but the missions were often too easy to complete. The DS game posed a tougher challenge, arguably too much so. Players also had to settle for a 2D perspective and limited graphics. Lastly, Digital Eclipse made the Game Boy Advance and N-Gage versions. Although the side-scrolling GBA title had cartoony in-game graphics, it borrowed cutscenes and backgrounds from the PC game. The N-Gage version combined some painfully slow 3D swinging levels with more responsive 2D sections. Both were underwhelming at best.

» [Game Boy Advance] Digital Eclipse's GBA game didn't capture the majesty of the home-console versions, but it did look lovely.



» [PlayStation 2] Each of the game's 17 chapters starts with a dramatic freeze-frame sequence.

» [PlayStation 2] Performing acrobatic tricks while flying through the air charges up your Spider Sense.

» [PlayStation 2] Spider-Man meeting Black Cat in one of the game's many cutscenes.

could suddenly cover large distances much more quickly than before, in a way that felt liberating and much truer to the film. "Spider-Man becomes more like a ball that just moves through space and is influenced by the choices we make with the controller," says Tomo. "That shifted our thinking towards uninterrupted movement. We were on the hunt for animation transitions that took account of player velocity. If you were swinging at like 70 miles an hour, if you let go, you'd fly at that speed before starting to slow down."

This one fundamental change served as the catalyst for so many others that came together to make *Spider-Man 2* far more engaging and memorable than its predecessor. Building a large open-world environment – a faithful recreation of Spider-Man's version of Manhattan that players could freely explore outside of missions – was one of the most significant, drawing inevitable comparisons with *Grand Theft Auto*.

Programmer Greg Taylor led the city's construction, which was a huge task. "It took longer than we expected. Greg definitely did get pretty stressed out," says Jamie. "One of the things we had that *GTA III* didn't have was the verticality. On *GTA*, you're usually down on the road so you can't see that far. If you haven't loaded in distant neighbourhoods because you don't have the memory, or whatever, then it didn't matter that much.

"With *Spider-Man*, you could go up to the top of the Empire State Building and look around so we needed something. You couldn't just have a fog plane, like so many games did back then. Somebody came up with the idea of loading in these low-detail neighbourhoods that were basically just boxes. Always having those things in memory was pretty key, and then just having the nearby stuff loaded in high detail."

Eric Pavone and other designers populated Manhattan with activity to keep players occupied between missions. You can make deliveries for the pizzeria and take photographs for the Daily Bugle. There are various races to complete, hidden tokens to collect and crimes to stop, each earning you Hero Points that are used to buy upgrades like new attack moves or increased swing speed.

The most common type of challenges in *Spider-Man 2*, where you have to stop a crime or help a member of the public, were referred to as 'shenanigans' by the Treyarch team. Some had to be initiated by players, while others occurred at random, leaving you to choose whether or not to intervene. Time limits occasionally applied, like when a ship was sinking or a construction worker was about to fall from a ledge.

The lack of variety in shenanigan scenarios is one of the game's biggest drawbacks, forcing players to stop an armed carjacking, rescue a kid's lost balloon or retrieve a stolen purse from a mugger many times over. This was a by-product of the approach the team had taken and the scale of what they were trying to achieve. "Part of the problem is that, in hindsight, we were a prototype game long enough that we had to use whatever the results were," says Tomo. "We were just diligently going on, building all kinds of complex infrastructure for a system that we didn't know would work. Because of the way we were doing it, it had to work."

TOYING WITH ENEMIES

SPIDER-MAN 2'S MELEE COMBAT SYSTEM PRIORITISED STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

Combat was another area that evolved to reflect the game's focus on making movement faster, smoother and more satisfying. A wide variety of acrobatic moves could be strung together quickly, creating impressive animation sequences that highlighted the influence of series like *Marvel Vs Capcom*, *Devil May Cry*, *Soulcalibur* and *Ninja Gaiden*.

"We had a combo system. We only had a limited number of buttons (web, jump and attack), but they were contextually sensitive," says Tomo. "If I hit 'web' in the air, I'd yank the guy up to my altitude and stick to it a little bit to accommodate the next button presses. It was fun how Spider-Man moved through space entirely through combat combos."

The experience was primarily designed to be enjoyable and visually appealing, with much less concern about the level of challenge that players faced. "It wasn't a great combat system; it was more of a gratuitous one. Being able to web a guy and then spin him around. Knock people around and tie them up to turn them into punching bags. It was totally there just as a fun decoration."

» [PlayStation 2] Spider-Man follows Black Cat as she quickly traverses the city's rooftops.

» [PlayStation 2] Spider-Man gains the upper hand in a second battle with Shocker.

"We developed a control scheme and a locomotion experience that could sustain an almost unlimited amount of exploration. We had no precedent for what we did"

TOMO MORIWAKI

"Some of that stuff, like the armoured car robbery, was really complicated. It was already a huge logical difference to the way we scripted gameplay. It meant we were going to have to be responsible for itemising what we pulled into the scene, and also when we dumped it out. That required a difficult and complex memory management and streaming logic model."

Matthew B Rhoades adapted the *Spider-Man 2* screenplay to create the story. It covers the main plotline, the rise of Doctor Octopus and his fusion experiment that threatens to destroy New York, but other Marvel villains like Rhino, Mysterio and Shocker are drafted in to extend the gameplay. A highly sexualised Black Cat competes with Mary Jane Watson for Spider-Man's attentions as he struggles to reconcile his superhero responsibilities with his normal life as Peter Parker. "We had to get approval and that wasn't automatic for us. We did a first round of just asking for a lot of different characters and a bunch of them came back 'no'. All the stuff that they said 'yes' to, we basically came up with a rationale for it," says Tomo. "We broke up the overall story into half a dozen pieces and then plopped the movie script's key points across that timeframe. We just found a place for it to fit in."

There was lots of extra content that the team wanted to include. Too much, as it turned out. "We were definitely behind schedule near the end. If the movie had come out when they originally said it was going to, I don't know what we would have done," says Jamie. "We got a three-month reprieve. That gave us time to bring more polish. Even with that, we had plans to do this whole sewer system with the Lizard boss, which ended up making it into the third game eventually."

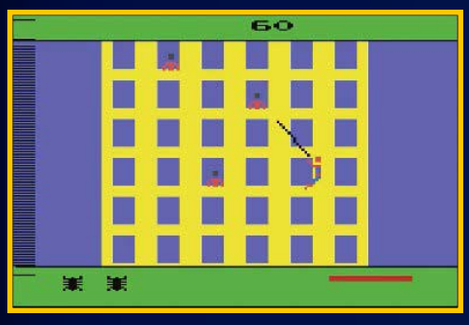
Looking back, Tomo believes that the team were simply too close to the project, and too passionate about it, to recognise that their bold plans were getting out of hand. Eventually, Activision had to intervene, requesting that Treyarch narrow the scope of the game considerably to ensure that everything could be finished in time. Some painful sacrifices had to be made. "*Spider-Man 2* must have more cut content than any game that had come out until that point," says Tomo. "The amount that was cut is staggering. There were some people on the project who had almost their entire work removed from the shipped game and that's terrible."

The control system used in *Spider-Man* was completely overhauled to make the sequel's gameplay as fluid and fast-paced as Treyarch wanted it to be. Amid all the excitement about what they'd created, there was an underlying concern that players might find the new controls too complex, potentially alienating a significant chunk of their audience.

Feedback from playtests was inconclusive. The team estimated that 10% of players might struggle but worried that the true figure could end up being even higher. "It's probably one

SPIDER-MAN'S LASTING APPEAL

THE MARVEL SUPERHERO HAS STARRED IN NUMEROUS VIDEOGAMES



SPIDER-MAN

■ Developed by Parker Brothers, the first-ever *Spider-Man* game was released on the Atari 2600 and Odyssey 2 in 1982. Swing up to the top of each building, targeting bombs and henchmen along the way, before defusing the Green Goblin's Super Bomb at the summit.

SPIDER-MAN VS THE KINGPIN

■ A major commercial success, this 1991 title was originally released on the Mega Drive, before being ported to various other Sega systems. The Kingpin frames Spider-Man for stealing a nuclear bomb, which he must deactivate before it explodes, as well as saving Mary Jane.

SPIDER-MAN: THE VIDEO GAME

■ An arcade classic from 1991. This is a side-scrolling beat-'em-up where you must take down a wide variety of enemies, including Venom, Scorpion, Sandman and Doctor Doom, to retrieve a mysterious artefact. You can also play as Black Cat, Sub-Mariner or Hawkeye.

» [PlayStation 2] Saving Mary Jane Watson from thugs in the alley behind the theatre.

» [PlayStation 2] The game's map, showing Spider-Man's location, a shop, the pizzeria and several races.

» [PlayStation 2] Punching away a clown at the entrance to Mysterio's hidden funhouse.

» [PlayStation 2] Preparing for the final showdown with Doctor Octopus in his waterfront laboratory.

of the most difficult core game mechanics that you can dump in somebody's lap and say, 'Here, learn this!'" says Jamie. "I was nervous as we were shipping the final thing. It was like, 'Will people just buy this and not be willing to figure out how to play it?' Most games with 3D swinging do fail, but I have a theory that the lure of Spider-Man means people are willing to get over that learning curve."

The new control system was much less intuitive than the previous one, but with the time and space to practise, which the open-world setting offered in abundance, its intricacies would gradually become second nature to most players, making *Spider-Man 2* a far more rewarding experience. Treyarch's leap of faith paid off spectacularly. With the success of the film, which was the third-highest grossing of 2004, *Spider-Man 2* was always destined to sell in huge numbers. Perhaps more significant was the overwhelmingly positive reception from players and critics, who praised the game for its vast scale, daring style and sheer fun factor. Sprinting, swinging, climbing and leaping around Manhattan was an absolute joy.

The developers reflect fondly on the process that led them there too. "I had an extremely good time and a ton of those people are still basically like family to me," says Tomo. "What we were able to discover, and accomplish, together was super-satisfying. It was a lot of work and, I think in hindsight, it was maybe at a somewhat unreasonable pace, but even that over-commitment just felt like mad science and experimentation.

"We developed a control scheme and a locomotion experience that could sustain an almost unlimited amount of exploration. We had no precedent for what we did and the way we did it gives me this clear example of why we take chances."

"In a lot of ways, I still feel like it was the peak of my career. Even over 20 years later, that's the coolest thing I've ever done, other than having kids!" laughs Jamie. "There's just something about *Spider-Man 2* that's special and enduring.

"The fact that *Spider-Man* games keep coming out, and they keep paying homage to that swinging mechanic we developed, really makes me happy and proud still to this day. We changed gaming history in our own tiny way, right?" ✱

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

■ Treyarch's third *Spider-Man* game hit shelves in 2005. Available on the PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox, it takes a similar open-world approach, but with distinctive cel-shaded graphics and the ability to play as Venom, whose own unique storyline overlaps with Spider-Man's.

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

■ Players control four different versions of Spider-Man, each stemming from a separate timeline in the Marvel universe – Amazing, Noir, 2099 and Ultimate. They work together to retrieve fragments of the Tablet Of Order And Chaos as gameplay styles vary across levels, emphasising different abilities.

MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

■ A huge hit for the PlayStation 4 in 2018 and the start of a new era for *Spider-Man* games. Savour an exhilaratingly cinematic experience, wrestling back control of Manhattan from the Sinister Six, a cabal of supervillains led by Mister Negative. Its sequel is even better.

SCREAM

IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** MILESTONE
» **DEVELOPER:** MILESTONE
» **RELEASE:** OUT NOW
» **PLATFORM:** STEAM, PS5, EPIC GAMES STORE, XBOX SERIES X/S
» **GENRE:** ARCADE RACER

FAR FROM MERELY DUSTING OFF SCREAMER AND GIVING IT HD VISUALS, MILESTONE HAS COMPLETELY REIMAGINED ITS NINETIES RACER. DIRECTOR MICHELE CALETTI DISCUSSES THE NEW GAME'S OVERHAULED COMBAT, MULTIPLE MODES AND CYBERPUNK ANIME NARRATIVE

WORDS BY RORY MILNE

Screamer's director Michele Caletti has been making hit racers at Milestone for decades.

Arcade racers triumphantly came home in the mid-Nineties thanks to the likes of Milestone's *Screamer* trilogy. Milestone still makes racing games, but it's only now that it's revisiting *Screamer*. The studio's development & creative director Michele Caletti explains why. "There were no new significant arcade racers coming out, we knew that the audience was there and just like us it was ready for something new. We were also shifting our internal focus from motorcycles to other racing subgenres, and it was time to make something that was completely unique."

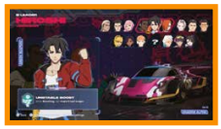
The new *Screamer*'s uniqueness comes from its teams of characters, reality-defying cars and the cyberpunk anime narrative integrated into its story mode. Michele points out that these were created in co-operation with external specialists. "We worked with an American writer on the story, an external concept artist for the characters, an external studio for the vehicles and the animation studio Polygon Pictures in Japan. We had very clear ideas of what we wanted, but we needed this level of expertise to bring them to reality."

Giving an arcade racer depth with a cyberpunk storyline is an innovative approach, and as Michele spells out, *Screamer*'s story mode 'The Tournament' isn't just bolted on. "For many on the team, anime was a central part of their formative years. Being set in the near future and throwing in some sci-fi elements was also the right bridge between the story and the gameplay. The story gradually introduces and explains mechanics, so it all connects together."

> "MANY RACING GAMES IN THE PAST INCLUDED A FIGHTING SYSTEM, SO THE IDEA WE HAD WAS TO LET YOUR RAGE GO WHEN YOU'RE ON THE ROAD"
> MICHELE CALETTI

Screamer's narrative concerns competing teams of drivers – or Screamers, that Michele considers important for player engagement and replay value. "The teams gave us a good opportunity to explore the dynamics of one team against another. Having teams elevates the storyline and sustains its complex narrative. Every team has its own storyline, and you can explore those team by team. So there's a lot to discover in that sense."

In terms of in-house development, Milestone's focus has been on the gameplay at *Screamer*'s core. Michele notes how it takes the original's combat to another level. "Many racing games in the past included a fighting system, so the idea we had was to



» [PC] Your choice of character in *Screamer* decides which power-ups you have when you tackle its challenges.

» [PC] Naturally *Screamer* has a mode where you try to beat your best times, and of course it has ghost cars to race against.

» [PC] *Screamer*'s story mode 'The Tournament' shows that cyberpunk anime and arcade racers are a natural fit.

» [PC] The checkpoint mode in *Screamer* recreates the experience of playing arcade racers like *Sega Rally*.

» [PC] Milestone has gone the extra mile with Screamer's Score Attack mode; there's even a high-score table!

let your rage go when you're on the road. But whenever you have an offensive measure you need a defensive one, so you can save stocks of Sync and use that as a shield."

Despite its innovations, fans of the original are well catered for, and as Michele observes, this is especially the case with *Screamer*'s Checkpoint and Time Attack modes. "These modes are the basic training grounds for your skills. Being lovers of games like *Daytona USA* and *Ridge Racer* these sorts of challenges are something that we couldn't miss out. These are the classic, bread-and-butter challenges for the arcade racer lover."

Similarly retro in feel is *Screamer*'s Score Attack mode. Michele describes it and the game's survival-based Overdrive Challenge. "In Score Attack every character has a string of challenges. You can make them short, medium or long, and then choose other aspects. The Overdrive Challenge is brutal! You just get faster, and after a short spell you get vulnerable. We've provided one shield, but after that if you hit the walls it's game over." As well as *Screamer*'s traditional modes, the game also allows players to create their own racing experiences, as Michele explains. "There's a mode called Race! where you can customise all the rules. If you want to have a race with no combat you can do it, if you want to have different levels of multipliers you can do that. So you can experiment in whatever way you think would be interesting."

Of equal importance are *Screamer*'s multiplayer modes. Michele runs us through the available options. "We have a mode called Mix Tape where you can have a sequence of tracks to race on, or you can jump into a quick-join mode with up to 16 players. Then you have a mode that's purely a team race. You can also have two or four-player split-screen races."

With its anime narrative-driven mechanics, its combat-focussed racing and its celebration of arcade racers, *Screamer* innovates by riffing on cherished concepts. So it's no wonder that Michele has high hopes for its release. "I'm pretty confident that we've made something that isn't present on the scene right now, so we're very positive about the public response. Because being a stand-out in an industry where innovation in recent years is not so frequent is something that will be a badge of honour." ✱

SCREAMER SERIES 101

A bluffer's guide to the classic Screamer titles

■ Channelling hit coin-op racers of the early to mid-Nineties like *Ridge Racer* and *Daytona USA*, *Screamer* brought the thrills of arcade racing home. PC gamers were treated to impossibly colourful polygon courses rendered at breakneck speeds and the highest of framerates. Up-tempo rock music by Allister Brimble only added to the game's coin-op credentials. A year later, *Screamer 2* followed in its wake. To get the best out of it you needed a pretty fast PC, but those that did were treated to *Sega Rally*-inspired racing action of the first order and a thumping techno soundtrack. Its successor, *Screamer Rally*, was perhaps more of a revision than an out and out sequel. Its vehicle customisation offered similar options, but these were all the more important to get right if you wanted to successfully race on its tracks. These were marked out from *Screamer 2*'s with the introduction of realism-enhancing holes and bumps. *Screamer Rally* also raised the bar in terms of hardware requirements with its support for 3D graphics cards. Although not developed by Milestone, the fourth game *Screamer 4x4* delivered a compelling take on off-road 4WD racing, although its release sadly led to a hiatus for the series.

» [PC] Local multiplayer is back and *Screamer* is on-trend with its two, three and four-player split-screen modes.

ULTIMATE GUIDE

PROJECT

AS WE PREPARE TO RETURN TO THE TERRIFYING LOST VILLAGE OF MINAKAMI IN KOEI TECMO'S PROJECT ZERO II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY REMAKE, WE TAKE A WALK BEYOND THE WOODS TO SEE WHAT MADE THE ORIGINAL PLAYSTATION 2 RELEASE SUCH A MEMORABLE HORROR GAME

WORDS BY ASHA BARDON

IN THE KNOW

- **PUBLISHER:** TECMO (JP), UBISOFT (US/UK)
- **DEVELOPER:** TECMO
- **PLATFORM:** PS2, XBOX
- **RELEASED:** 2003
- **GENRE:** SURVIVAL HORROR

***Project Zero* (named for the internal team that made it) is an oddity.** It popped up in 2002 on the PlayStation 2 and pitched a Japanese haunted house – *Himuro Mansion* – which the cover claimed was based on a real story (it was not). The player wanders the halls as Miku Hinasaki, who is looking for her lost brother, with only a mystical camera for protection and defence.

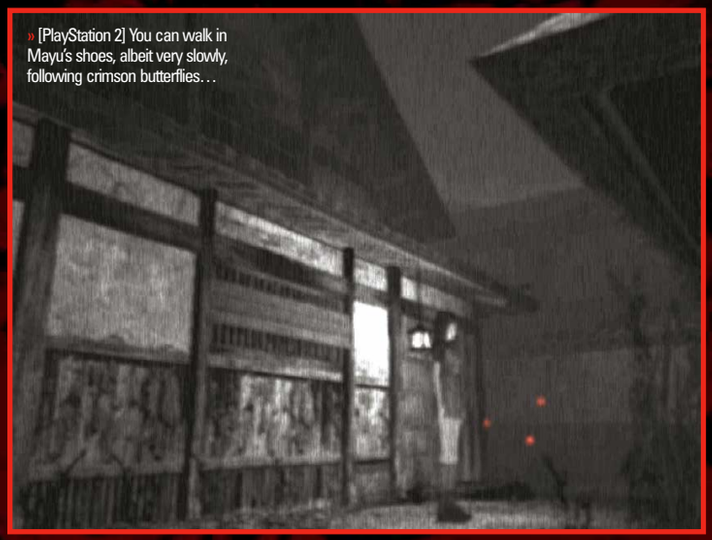
This meant the player must use grades of film and stare into the face of terrifying Japanese ghosts – onryō and yūrei, called Wraiths in the upcoming Remake – to defeat them. While the original (also known as *Fatal Frame*) was difficult and censored in the West, the game was a moderate success so it was no surprise, thanks to the Japanese horror boom inspired by films like *Ring* and *Ju-On*, when Tecmo greenlit a sequel.

Crimson Butterfly is a much bigger project but also a standalone sequel, both in terms of story and also scope. The story can be played on its own but still has a larger connection to the *Project Zero* universe if you know where to look. It also mixes the dark, low draw distance of Sony's console to create a claustrophobic village lost to darkness.

The early trailers mixed the J-pop aesthetic of Tsukiko (now Tsuki) Amano with an ominous English voiceover talking about the mysterious Lost Village and how one twin must kill the other, with footage of twins Mio and Mayu Amakura running for their lives, with only a camera to protect them…

"CRIMSON BUTTERFLY IS A MUCH BIGGER PROJECT BUT ALSO A STANDALONE SEQUEL, BOTH IN TERMS OF STORY AND ALSO SCOPE"

» [PlayStation 2] In true Sadako Yamamura fashion, ghosts take their time creeping towards you…



» [PlayStation 2] You can walk in Mayu's shoes, albeit very slowly, following crimson butterflies…

ZERO II

CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

NOTABLE CHARACTERS

INTRODUCING THE CAST OF ALL GOD'S VILLAGE, BOTH LIVING AND DEAD…

MIO AMAKURA

■ The younger twin and the protagonist of *Project Zero II: Crimson Butterfly*, Mio must find her sister with only the Camera Obscura to protect her. She holds a lot of guilt over causing her sister's disability when they were younger.

MAYU AMAKURA

■ The elder twin who limps due to her leg being damaged as a child. Mayu (left) finds herself in All God's Village with her sister after noticing a strange, glowing crimson butterfly which leads the girls towards a terrible destiny.

ITSUKI TACHIBANA

■ Itsuki is found imprisoned and offers aid to Mio, mistaking her for Yae Kurosawa. He is a Remaining, which means he killed his twin, Mutsuki, in the ceremony prior to the one which failed, destroying All God's Village.

SAE KUROSAWA

■ The white kimono-wearing spirit makes for a menacing figure as she stands in a pool of blood and corpses. Sae was the last twin to participate in the town's ceremony but because her sister, Yae, escaped, the ritual failed and the village was swallowed whole.

Mio Amakura and her sister Mayu revisit a childhood spot where they used to play, the same space where Mayu fell and damaged her leg, leaving her with a limp.

The game, despite being set in Japan, only had an English dub in the US and Europe. Happily, though, retro-gaming enthusiasts will find patched ROMs that include 'undubbing' (the game's text and menu is in English but uses the Japanese dub). However, the game maintains a lot of the nuance of a Japan-set horror game so, for example, Minakamimura becomes All God's Village, a literal translation which still manages to sound clunky.

After the girls pass a Guardian Stone (a dōsojin, which marks boundaries), they find themselves transported to a strange lost village lit by the full moon hanging in the night sky. The girls begin by being led into the Osaka House, which serves as a tutorial area. The village itself eventually ▶

» [PlayStation 2] Search for clues, guided by the Camera Obscura, to find keys and other important items.

» [PlayStation 2] The game uses black-and-white, grainy sequences to push the story and scare factor.

» [PlayStation 2] Gemstones can be listened to using the Spirit Stone Radio, offering information via the thoughts of the owner.

» [PlayStation 2] Be patient and catch ghosts just at the right moment for Zero Shots and Fatal Frames…

▶ opens up, allowing Mio time to explore, solve environmental puzzles and delve deeper into the hidden side of the village and its strange rituals.

Woven into this is the story of another set of twins: Sae and Yae Kurosawa, the last set of twins to participate in the Crimson Ritual. However, after Yae escaped the village, Sae was murdered by the village's priest, causing the ritual to fail. Yae's angry ghost returned, dragging the village into a space between life and death, killing all the villagers and trapping anyone who walks past the Marker Stone. Sae is able to possess Mayu, guiding her back to the Hellish Abyss in order to conduct the ritual correctly and free all the trapped spirits.

> "WHILE CRIMSON BUTTERFLY COMES WITH SEVERAL DIFFICULTY SETTINGS, IT IS STILL NOT AN EASY GAME"

Combat is done via the Camera Obscura, a mystical film-based camera which allowed for a kind of digital photography back before digital photography was even a thing. Mio finds the camera in the Osaka House and discovers it is able to help her defeat angry ghosts, unlock doors held shut by unseen forces, find keys and solve puzzles. However, it also allows her to snap blink-and-you'll-miss-it shots of random ghosts going about their day which became a major completionist impulse in a game that was published long before Achievements and Trophies were a thing.

» [PlayStation 2] Ornamental keys will unlock locked doors around All God's Village.

Like the other survival horror games of the era – *Haunting Ground*, *Clocktower 3*, *Silent Hill 2* and *Rule Of Rose*, *Crimson Butterfly* relies on tank controls and very slow, weak protagonists. Mio moves at a slow jog at best on her own, even slower when she's protecting Mayu, however this mechanic is closer to the one used in *Ico* than it is in typical escort quests. Mayu, in turn, has stronger psychic abilities and is able to see ghosts and the crimson butterflies which flutter around the village.

While *Crimson Butterfly* comes with several difficulty settings, it is still not an easy game. Yes, Mio finds herself with an unlimited stock of the lowest grade film (a step up from the original game where you could lock yourself in if you ran out of film, unable to proceed further). Game saves can be made using Butterfly Lanterns, although these are still limited and required frequent saving and backtracking.

Mio also has access to the Spirit Stone Radio, also created by Dr Asō, the inventor of the Camera Obscura. This allows Mio to collect gemstones and other items which reveal clues in the environments and let her eavesdrop on the thoughts of the ghosts or humans carrying them. ▶

BEHIND THE MELODY OF CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

A LOOK INTO THE MUSICAL WORLD OF TSUKI AMANO…

■ *Chō* or *Butterfly* was the song written for the game by Tsuki Amano. It first debuted in the early game trailers and was written to pair well with the game's emotional weight and the horrific and sad ending. Image songs are more about the vibe with Amano encapsulating the search for someone she loved, in the same way as Mio explores the village looking for Mayu.

DEVELOPER Q+A WITH MAKOTO SHIBATA AND HIDEHIKO NAKAJIMA

CRIMSON BUTTERFLY IS PROBABLY THE MOST BELOVED TITLE IN THE SERIES, WHY DID YOU WANT TO REMAKE THE GAME NOW FOR MODERN CONSOLES AND AUDIENCES?
Hidehiko Nakajima: When we released the recent remasters, we received many requests from fans asking specifically for *Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly*. Responding to those voices was the primary reason behind this project. As it is one of the most popular titles in the series, we felt that a full remake – rather than a simple remaster – would allow it to be embraced by players who enjoy a wide variety of modern horror games today.

WHY DO YOU THINK JAPAN-SET HORROR IS SO POPULAR OUTSIDE OF JAPAN AND WHY DO YOU THINK _CRIMSON BUTTERFLY_ IS SO POPULAR AROUND THE WORLD?
Makoto Shibata: Horror titles set in Japan often convey a sense of realism that its creators understand intuitively, and we believe that authenticity resonates with overseas players as well. The *Fatal Frame* series minimises jump scares and graphic depictions, focussing instead on fear that stimulates the imagination. Among the series, *Crimson Butterfly* strikes a particularly strong balance between story and horror, which we believe led many players to complete the game. As a result, I think the impactful ending may have left a lasting impression in their memories.

WHY DO YOU THINK THE CAMERA OBSCURA WORKS SO WELL AS AN IN-GAME DEFENCE MECHANISM?
HN: In many horror games, being approached by an enemy puts the player at a disadvantage. In contrast, combat with the Camera Obscura requires players to capture Wraiths in the viewfinder, face them directly, and draw them in close. We believe this risk-and-reward structure is very deliberate. In this title, we replaced lenses from previous entries with filters. Each filter not only changes how the viewfinder looks, but also offers distinct functions that are useful not only in combat, but also during exploration.

YOU'VE ADDED IN NEW MECHANICS LIKE THE HAND-HOLDING SYSTEM, DO YOU REGARD THIS REMAKE AS THE DEFINITIVE VERSION OF THE GAME?
MS: Yes. The producer told us to make sure we would have no regrets. This remake can be considered a definitive edition that incorporates ideas we have carried since the original release, as well as everything that can now be achieved with modern technology.

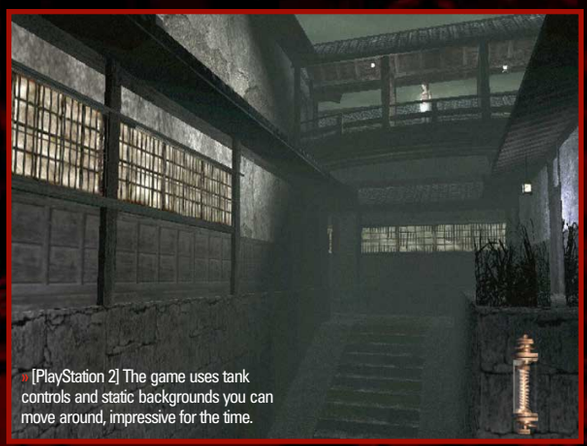
OUTSIDE OF THE WELL-KNOWN CAST IN THE GAME LIKE MIO, MAYU AND ITSUKI, DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE SIDE CHARACTER IN MINAKAMI VILLAGE?
MS: Personally, my favourite spirit is Chitose Tachibana. While many Wraiths attack the player, Chitose instead runs away and hides. Unlike other spirits, there is something about her that makes defeating her feel almost heartbreaking. In this remake, she also appears more frequently through side stories, so I encourage players to experience that for themselves.

THE VARIOUS DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE GAME HAVE ALWAYS HAD NEW ENDINGS, CAN YOU GIVE US A HINT AT WHAT WE CAN EXPECT FROM THE REMAKE WHEN IT COMES TO ENDINGS AND REPLAYABILITY?
HN: In addition to the original ending of *Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly*, a new ending has been added. In this new ending, players can also hear a brand-new song by Tsuki Amano, so we hope they will play through to experience it. To make it easier to view endings and complete various collectibles, the game includes chapter select and a New Game option that carries over upgrades. Floating Wraith photography, which was added after the original release, is also included, and we encourage players to make full use of these features to find and photograph everything.

FINALLY, TSUKI AMANO HAS BEEN A PART OF THE FRANCHISE SINCE THE ORIGINAL _CRIMSON BUTTERFLY_ GAME RELEASED AND HAS CONTRIBUTED MANY, POWERFUL IMAGE SONGS TO THE FRANCHISE, CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT HER CONTRIBUTION TO _CRIMSON BUTTERFLY REMAKE_?
MS: For the new ending, we entrusted Tsuki Amano with creating the theme song after sharing the ending's concept, intent and the characters' emotional states with her. For each title in the series, she has consistently captured the game's themes from her own perspective and expressed them through song. We believe her music plays an important role in adding depth to the world of the game.

HIDEHIKO NAKAJIMA

MAKOTO SHIBATA


» [PlayStation 2] The game uses tank controls and static backgrounds you can move around, impressive for the time.

» [Xbox] In addition to new endings and costumes, the Xbox version has a cool first-person mode.

SURVIVING THE HORROR

THESE USEFUL PLAYING TIPS WILL LET YOU SURVIVE AS YOU EXPLORE CRIMSON BUTTERFLY'S ALL GOD'S VILLAGE

SNAP THEM QUICKLY!

■ Ghosts wander the village, but not all of them want to hurt you. Malevolent ghosts are orange-red while other ghosts will be blue, often flashing in and out of your field of view. Snap them before they're gone for special photos.

EXPLORE! EXPLORE! EXPLORE!

■ All God's Village is huge and filled with ghosts. But resources are finite so it's very important that you look everywhere for the various grades of film, Sacred Water and Herbal Medicine, as you will need it.

WHAT'S IN AN ENDING?

■ For your first playthough, focus on the story and the combat. You're more than likely to get the Crimson Butterfly or Lingering Scent endings (where Mio leaves Mayu behind). On your second run, aim for the Hellish Abyss ending by playing on Hard Mode.

WIIMAKING CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

HOW PROJECT ZERO SHIFTED TO NINTENDO'S WII

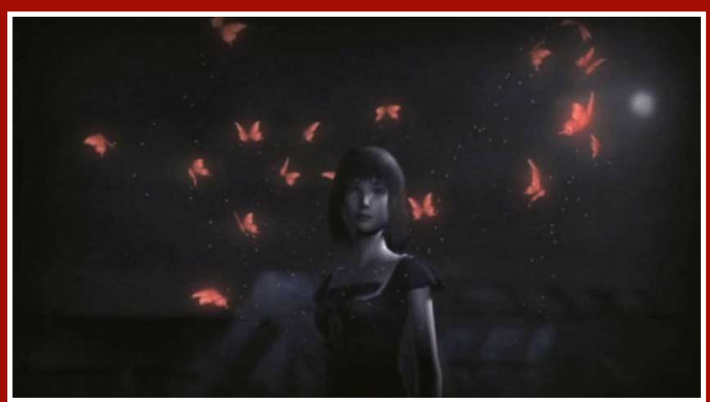
■ In 2012, the remake of *Crimson Butterfly – Deep Crimson Butterfly*, or *Project Zero 2: Wii Edition* – hit the Wii in Japan, Europe and the US.

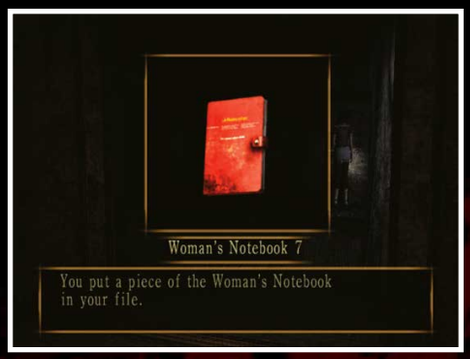
The game kept the storyline, ghosts and plot beats but updated the action, graphics and added numerous quality-of-life tweaks. It removed the classic tank controls and shifted the perspective to an over-the-shoulder perspective a la *Resident Evil*. The game included newly rendered cutscenes, new outfits and even a new – best – ending.

Developed by Team Ninja, (which also developed series like *Ninja Gaiden*, *Nioh* and the upcoming *Crimson Butterfly Remake*), *Deep Crimson Butterfly* took inspiration from the then-Wii Japan-exclusive *Mask Of The Lunar Eclipse*, including a quick turn button and pick-up mechanic which would often see ghosts doing sneak attacks as you try to grab a shiny item from the floor.

The game was well received and also included two new endings, as well as a new image song – *Kurenai* or *Crimson* – written and sung by Tsuki Amano. This first ending, which sees a second Repentance coming, has Mio and Mayu remembering a shadow festival and refusing to be separated ever again. The second new ending saw Mayu, possessed by Sae, turn Mio into a living doll…

The game's success ultimately led to the Wii U-exclusive *Maiden Of Black Water* and the franchise briefly became attached to Nintendo, before the later remasters of *Maiden* and *Eclipse*, which paved the way for *Crimson Butterfly Remake*.





PACKING A PUNCH!

■ As the game continues, you can use points gained from shooting ghosts and convert them into new lenses, power-ups and the ability to hold more film. Remember to go into your menu and periodically spend them to make life a little easier!

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

■ One of the more fun environmental puzzles involves photographs showing you an area you need to find in order to open a door or get access to a new location. Most of the time you'll recognise the spot as soon as you get there.

LORE-DUMPING LIKE IT'S 1985

■ Most of the lore comes from the items you find in the village: newspaper clippings, notes, diary entries and even video in the form of projector film. These are superimportant as they will slowly piece together the story and the true horror of All God's Village.

Much of the lore-dumping and exposition is done via newspaper clippings, notes and photos, while cutscenes and full voice acting break up the gameplay elements. These cutscenes were created for the initial trailers and the game, but also ended up on a themed ride called Zero 4D that was found around Japan as late as 2010.

Using an open-world and chapter-based structure, the game allows Mio to explore the whole village and also offers multiple endings (three in the PS2 version, four in the Xbox version and seven in the Wiimake. We also know there is at least one new ending in the upcoming remake, as it includes a new image song, *Utsushie* or *Sketch/Shadowgraph*.

Crimson Butterfly also has a strong focus on outfits you can earn, from a maid uniform to character costumes from Tecmo's popular *Dead Or Alive series*. (These are found in the Xbox's *Director's Cut* while Mario and Luigi outfits feature in the Wii version.) The remake is also continuing this with an upcoming collaboration with Konami's 2025 horror title *Silent Hill f*.

"MUCH OF THE LORE-DUMPING AND EXPOSITION IS DONE VIA NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, NOTES AND PHOTOS, WHILE CUTSCENES AND FULL VOICE ACTING BREAK UP THE GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS"

» [PlayStation 2] Butterfly Lanterns offer a place to save the game and spend points acquired from photographing ghosts.

Like other titles of the time, there is a strong focus on puzzles from 'find x key' or deciphering glyphs and finding corresponding locations from photographs, to inventory management for rare items, resources and key items. This made the game even more of a challenge in a time before wikis and online strategy guides, especially when you factor in the requirements for each ending.

Where the game works is in its unique horror aesthetic. All God's Village is filled with terrifying Japanese ghosts and the various locations you visit are a mix of wooden floors, paper screens and sliding or bolted doors. Every slow creak, every ghost flitting past just adds to the slow chill of J-horror. It is the alien-ness of the village which makes it such a compelling location to explore and it's filled with rooms with kimonos on stands, libraries full of books and Shinto shrines with their own secrets. Finally, there's the dark tone of the Crimson Ritual itself where one twin murders the other in order to placate the Hellish Abyss,

With the remake about to be released (it even includes a retro viewfinder for fans of the original game), this is the perfect time to revisit the PS2 original. Anyone who wants to practice their photography or enjoy slow-burn horror with deep themes and terrifying combat, should be sure to take a visit to All God's Village. ★

Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hands

CRUSHED DREAMS

» GAME BOY ADVANCE » 2003
» KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN

I love a good gimmick so *Boktai*'s main mechanic instantly appealed to me. Hideo Kojima's vampire game relied on actual sunlight to make progress, so you were actively encouraged to go outside and get a dose of the good stuff if you wanted to give the game's many vampires a good battering.

What I really loved about Kojima's new game though was that the Japanese edition of it launched alongside a black-and-red Game Boy Advance SP, which looked incredibly cool compared to the single-colour editions we often got in the UK. So after paying about £250, I ordered a copy from PlayAsia and waited for my new GBA to turn up.

I loved that machine and I took it everywhere I went, the in-laws, the cinema (although I didn't play *Boktai*) and even restaurants. Everywhere I went that little black-and-red device went with me, until one day I took it on a press trip.

We were travelling up to London to see an *NBA Jam* game and I was still within my probationary period on *games™*, so I should have been on my best behaviour. Being new to the excess (at least back then) of game launch parties, I had way too many free drinks and woke up the next morning in a London hospital. I had been picked up wandering the streets by an ambulance and the night staff were keen to get me out before the day staff turned up.

Anyone else's first thought might have been to phone their wife or wonder why the rest of their colleagues had simply gone home without them [Ahem! We spent about an hour looking for you! But we had to get the coach back to Bournemouth and didn't get home until way after 3am – Tim], but all I could think about was my precious GBA. I was in a hospital gown (my clothes had apparently been ruined) and I'd put my GBA in the back pocket of my jeans, as I was nervous about leaving it on the bus.

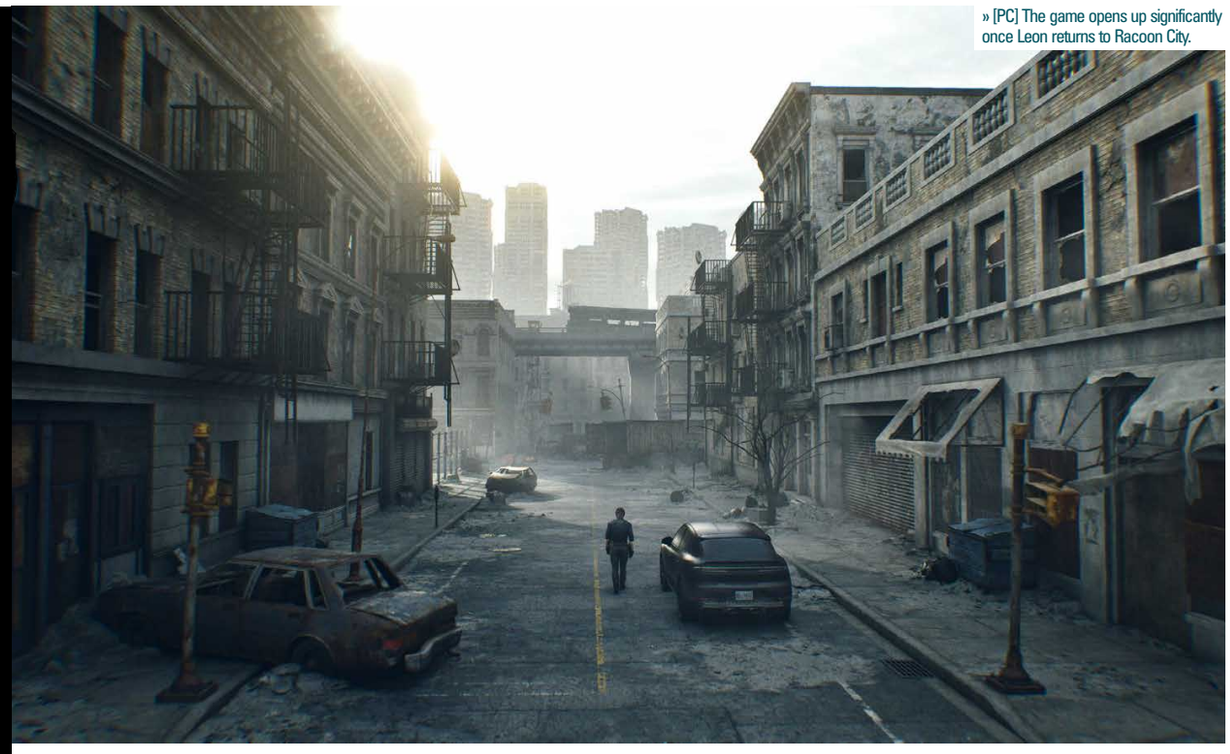
I asked for my belongings, saying I should have a wallet, mobile phone, glasses and a small games console. My mobile, wallet and its contents were long gone and my glasses were smashed and useless, but the GBA was there in all its glory. I opened it up to play it as I waited to be discharged and that's when I saw that the screen was smashed to pieces.

I must have fallen on my backside while drunk and my large posterior had pulverised my precious console. The nurse let me phone my wife Melanie and also gave me a fiver so I could travel the Underground to Waterloo Station. I was able to make another call to Melanie who booked me a ticket home. I got moved up to first class as people complained I looked weird due to still being in a hospital gown (think *28 Days Later* but with no zombies) and I was picked up at the station by Melanie and we went straight to Vision Express so I could get new glasses. I then rolled into work.

I didn't drink for about four years after that, but there is a happy ending to my tale of woe. Despite being told it would be impossible to fix, a local games store did indeed replace my GBA's screen. Needless to say, I never left it in my back pocket again. ✱

RETRORATED

>> This month we hang out with Leon S Kennedy and Grace Ashcroft, try out the latest Evercade cartridge, go on a giant adventure in a spaceship, battle our way through the latest Rushing Beat game and catch some Pokémon



» [PC] The game opens up significantly once Leon returns to Racoon City.

Resident Evil: Requiem

A GAME OF TWO HALVES

INFORMATION

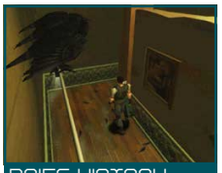
- **SYSTEM:** PC
- **ALSO ON:** PLAYSTATION 5, SWITCH 2, XBOX SERIES S/X
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- **PLAYERS:** 1

Has it really been 30 years since we made our first cautious steps into the Spencer Mansion? The ninth mainline game of the *Resident Evil* series looks back at its past, but also makes tentative steps into new areas, hinting at another new direction for Capcom's long-running franchise.

In some ways this ninth instalment reminds us of *Resident Evil 6*, not because it's a bad game, but because it juggles characters whilst presenting different faces of the popular series. You'll spend the early part of your adventure as FBI analyst Grace Ashcroft who returns to where her mother was brutally murdered when survivors of the Racoon City incident start mysteriously dying.

It's not long before the out-of-her-depth agent is captured by ex-Umbrella scientist Victor Gideon and forced to escape from his Spencer Mansion-esque care centre, which is filled with dangerous inhabitants and a terrifying new antagonist that relentlessly chases Grace as she tries to escape the clinic. Played out in the first-person perspective of the newer games in the series, these sections are superb, capturing the terror of the earlier games, while delivering plenty of jump scares due to the in-your-face perspective. While you can switch to a third-person viewpoint, we feel first-person helps Grace's character immensely, as it highlights her relative inexperience in the field. Grace can also craft items by using the blood of

» [PC] It's indicated early on that Leon is suffering from some sort of infliction. Fortunately, he's still as quippy as ever.



BRIEF HISTORY

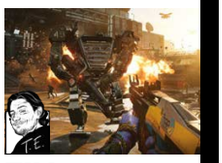
» The original *Resident Evil* appeared in 1996 and introduced many gamers to the concept of survival horror. Just like the virus that's central to the franchise's story, the series has gone through many changes in the intervening years, most notably with *Resident Evil 4* in 2005 and the 2017 release *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard*, which introduced a first-person perspective.

★ PICKS OF THE MONTH

DARRAN

Resident Evil: Requiem

It doesn't quite hit the highs of the greatest *Resident Evil* games, but I still had a lot of fun.



TIM

Avatar: Frontiers Of Pandora

There wasn't much on Game Pass, so I went and completed this, and didn't enjoy any of it. Anti-pick!

» [PC] Grace can craft items from the blood of enemies, including serums that deliver one-shot kills.

» [PC] It wouldn't be a *Resident Evil* game without an overpowered foe relentlessly chasing you down.

defeated enemies and combining it with other items, which feels like a call back to the scanning found in the *Revelations* games.

Leon S Kennedy is also investigating the mysterious deaths of Raccoon City and his path soon starts crossing with Grace's. As you'd expect, Leon's sections are far more action-orientated and the traditional third-person viewpoint he uses (which again, can be switched) better demonstrates his skills in the field. He's picked up a few new tricks since we last encountered him and as a result combat throughout is far tighter, dynamic and more fluid than we've ever seen in earlier games.

Leon is far more capable with weapons and also comes equipped with an axe which not only makes short work of opponents, but can also parry enemy attacks and prise open objects that Grace struggles to access. At first, the game's focus typically falls on Grace, with Leon's sections offering short, but intense adrenaline rushes, but once the game returns to Racoon City, Leon takes centre stage in a section that hints at where the series might move to in the future.

While this area isn't strictly open world, it does significantly open up the play area in a way we've not seen in the series before, allowing for some significant exploration. Although Capcom itself describes *Resident Evil 9* as having Metroidvania elements, this section actually feels more like the design of Fromsoftware's *Dark Souls* games, so well is it crafted together into a cohesive, explorable area. It doesn't always work (it's essentially an overly long fetch quest) but the exploration is interspersed with some fantastic boss fights and gripping setpieces and offers a tantalising glimpse into what we can expect from *Resident Evil* games in the future.

It's great to see Capcom is still prepared to try new things with its popular series, but it's also pleasing to see the respect it clearly holds for the franchise's origins. Leon is assisted throughout by a classic character, many areas of the game are eerily reminiscent of past locations from earlier titles, while Leon himself gets to return to one very important chapter of his life. There's an incredibly atmospheric section later in the game that neatly links Grace's past to the character assisting Leon, while Capcom does a commendable job of unravelling the messy lore that has bogged down the series over the last 30 years. We also liked how you can play the game in Classic Mode, which effectively requires you to use Ink Ribbons to save like in the earlier *Resident Evil* games.

Requiem certainly suffers from a saggy middle (as many of us do as we get older) but it starts and finishes strongly and while it doesn't bring much new mechanically to the series, what's here is as finely honed as Leon's shiny new axe. Unfortunately, the game's ten-hour (ish) running time isn't the only lean thing about it, as there's little to do once the main quest has been completed. You'll certainly have a good time while it lasts though. ✱

In a nutshell

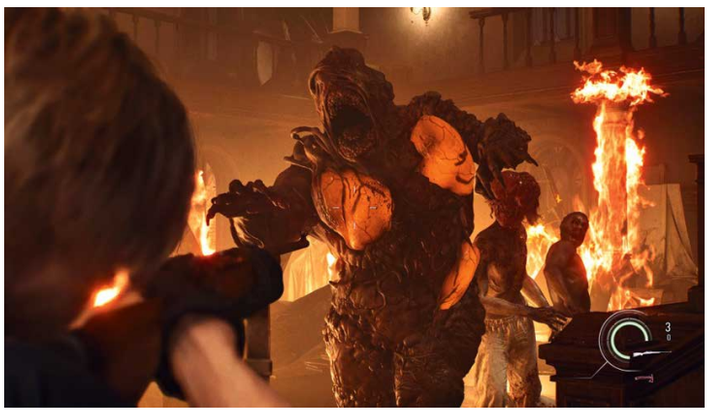
It's as polished as you'd expect from a AAA game and there's no denying that Leon S Kennedy is one of gaming's best action heroes, but his trip to Raccoon City does deflate the game's otherwise excellent pacing somewhat.

>> Score **85%**

✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
RESIDENT EVIL 4 (GAMECUBE)

▼ SOMETHING NEW
SILENT HILL F (PC)



» [PC] Leon's sections are far more action-packed than Grace's and offer some exhilarating setpieces.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Minishoot' Adventures

A MINIATURE ADVENTURE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

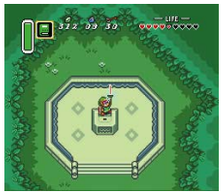
INFORMATION

- **FORMAT:** XBOX SERIES S/X
- **ALSO ON:** PC, PLAYSTATION 5, SWITCH, SWITCH 2
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £11.99+
- **PUBLISHER:** SOULGAME STUDIO, INDIEARK
- **DEVELOPER:** SOULGAME STUDIO
- **PLAYERS:** 1

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (SNES)



▼ SOMETHING NEW

ARCHVALE (PC)

BRIEF HISTORY

» SoulGame Studios consists of two cousins, Argl and Kuho, who are based in Toulouse, France. The duo have released a number of popular indie games, including *Soul Driver*, *Swords & Souls*, as well as two *Rogue Souls* games.

GO DEEPER

The facts behind Minishoot' Adventures

» *Minishoot' Adventures* originally debuted on PC in early 2024 and was a nominee for that year's Indie Game Awards.

» *Minishoot' Adventures* is currently available on Game Pass, which is how Tim discovered it and subsequently suggested it for review.

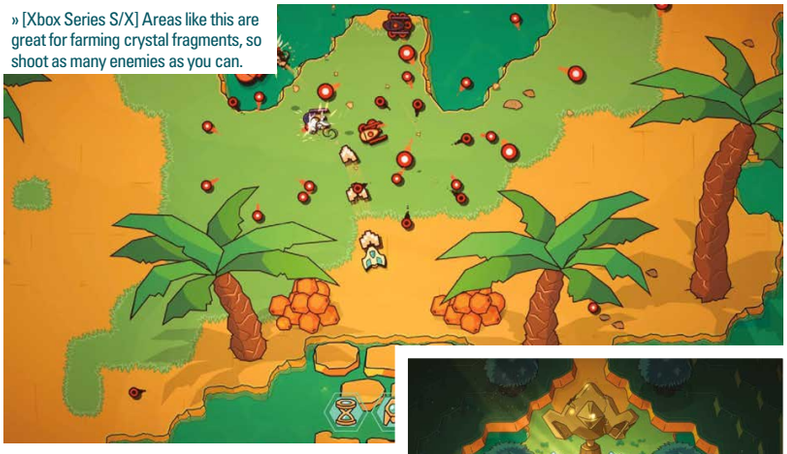
» An item was added to let you locate missing collectibles as Argl doesn't like wasting hours hunting them down in other games.

We've played all sorts of shmups over the years, but we've never experienced one quite as creative as *Minishoot' Adventures*. Feeling like a bizarre love child between *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Metroid* and *Thunder Force 2*, *Minishoot' Adventures* tasks you with locating your missing friends and finding the resting place of the Unchosen. It's a relatively simple story requiring you to traverse a surprisingly large open world and work out how to find access to and then solve the game's many dungeons.

Initially you'll find progress frustrating as it's not always clear where you're supposed to be going and whenever you go underground it's impossible to note your location, but as you slowly explore and investigate the various nooks and crannies hidden around the brilliantly designed map, you'll gradually start making headway and the game really opens up.

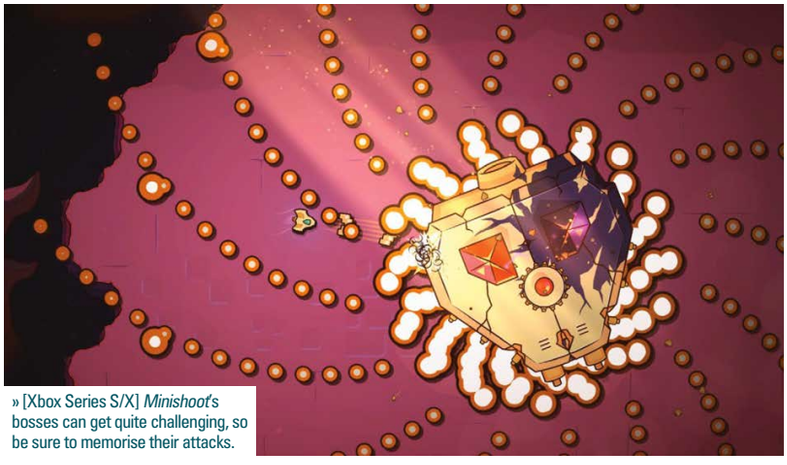
Stylistically and mechanically it reminds us of *A Link To The Past*, with bold, primary colours painting each environment and the challenging boss dungeons that require you to solve basic puzzles and defeat numerous monsters, but there are also elements of Metroidvania games here as well, as later ship upgrades will allow you to blast pesky boulders or fly over once impassable stretches of water to reach brand-new areas.

Once you do encounter a dungeon's boss you'll find yourself dodging intricate waves of densely packed bullets that require a surprising amount of dexterity and skill to bypass. Initially these mayors don't put up too much of a challenge, but as the ten-hour adventure progresses their ordnance will become more powerful and their bullet patterns more tightly packed, meaning you have quite the fight on your hand if you choose the higher difficulty level (of which there are three).



» [Xbox Series S/X] Areas like this are great for farming crystal fragments, so shoot as many enemies as you can.

Thankfully, shooting enemies leaves behind crystal fragments which will slowly fill up to form crystals. These can then be put towards a variety of useful upgrades, from speed boosts and increased firepower, to longer-reaching and faster-firing shots. The friends you rescue also make your quest easier, providing you with better firepower (for a price of course), free health restores and items that will make exploration far easier. Many additional items can be found by taking down the mini-bosses that are dotted around the world.



» [Xbox Series S/X] *Minishoot*'s bosses can get quite challenging, so be sure to memorise their attacks.

» [Xbox Series S/X] Power-ups offer various abilities and can make traversal easier or power-up your craft.

What makes *Minishoot' Adventures* so much fun is the actual world itself. It's jam-packed with hidden secrets to discover and while some of the puzzles can feel a little obtuse at times, it's really satisfying when everything clicks and you're able to finally finish off an underground area. There are Sprites that can be raced, fragments of lore to be tracked down and countless enemies to blow apart. The sense of exploration is really involved at times, but it's also rewarding and it always feels like there's something new to do (particularly once the game is completed).

With its tight controls, finely balanced gameplay and dynamic open world, *Minishoot' Adventures* is a genuinely excellent game and it's astonishing to think that it's the work of just two talented individuals. It's certainly taken a long time to reach consoles, but anyone who plays it will understand that the wait was absolutely worth it.

In a nutshell

A delightful fusion of genres that proves you don't need huge teams or gigantic budgets to deliver genuinely enjoyable gaming experiences. Top stuff!

>> **Score 90%**

YOUR GAME IS NOT OVER

CONTINUE?

[Y]/[Y]

You can continue the games you grew up with.
No setup drama, no compatibility issues — just install and play.
Your favorite classics run smoothly on GOG.
Relive the magic. Own the moment

USE CODE
RETROGOG20 for -20%
OFF YOUR FIRST PURCHASE

Offer valid until December 31st, 2026!

gog.com

★ PICK OF THE MONTH

Rushing Beat X: Return Of Brawl Brothers

» **System:** PC (tested), PS5, Switch 2, Xbox Series S/X » **Buy it for:** £15.99 (digital), £36+ (physical) » **Buy it from:** Online

Despite some decent entries, Jaleco's *Rushing Beat* series never gained the same popularity in the West as franchises like *Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage* did. The series is now back after a 23-year hiatus and it's a surprising amount of fun that should appeal to both fans of the series and the genre in general.

The game's plot is completely ridiculous, but it does a surprisingly good job of pulling together all the lore from the earlier games (often using cute sepia-toned pixel images of past events). It's funny as well, and is not afraid to take either pot shots at itself or other aspects of pop culture (there's a great *Thriller* gag later in the game). Ultimately though it's just barmy nonsense and is largely there to introduce the seven playable characters (one of which is unlocked upon completing the game).

One of the strengths of *Rushing Beat X* is how varied each hero is. They cover a wide range of play styles and feature everything from nimble ninjas to hulking brutes that slowly wander around but cause immeasurable damage when their attacks connect. Mechanically the game is varied too, building on the earlier games while adding new wrinkles that help it stand apart from other modern scrolling fighters. The game's Rage Gauge has multiple uses depending on how filled it is, and lets you deliver powerful blows, hurl away enemies or deliver intense combos. There's plenty more to discover to, from counters to combos and even the option to make meals by combining uneaten food. Still, *Rushing Beat X* is not without its issues. It's not always easy to tell if your attacks are being blocked, some of the later enemies feel a bit spongy and there are annoying difficulty spikes. Despite this, it's easily the best game in the series and a must-play for fans of the genre.

>> **Score 76%**

» [PC] While we're not massively sold on the visuals, we do enjoy the comic-book styled approach *Rushing Beat X* takes.

» [PC] The range of available characters is great and you'll easily find one that suits your playing style.

Area Wars

» **System:** PC » **Buy it for:** £2.49
» **Buy it from:** steampowered.com

If you're looking for a hardcore old-school shooter it's hard to go wrong with *Area Wars*. Each stage has you shooting down enemies while contained in a small area, which changes in size with each new enemy wave you encounter. You've a limited amount of bombs and lives, while a useful timer bar tells you when the next wave will begin. You'll also have to contend with some exceedingly tough bosses.

Later levels get almost puzzle-like in their structure and the difficulty ramps up significantly as well, perhaps too much.

It's admittedly very basic and there's very little in the way of extras, but it's hard to argue with the £2.49 entry point.

DARRAN JONES

>> **Score 68%**

Pokémon Pokopia

» **System:** Switch 2 » **Buy it for:** £58.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail

The latest *Pokémon* spin-off is a delightful fusion of *Minecraft* and *Animal Crossing* and as you can imagine, it's a gigantic time sink. The main appeal of *Pokopia* comes from building suitable habitats to entice new Pokémon and then doing numerous tasks to keep them happy. Playing as a Ditto, you can learn abilities from other Pokémon to reshape your environment and the aim of the game is to make the region habitable again so that humans (and hopefully your trainer) will return. This is a genuinely delightful experience, largely thanks to the interactions you have with the Pokémon and the many things you can build. More please, Omega Force.

DARRAN JONES

>> **Score 80%**

Evercade: Taito Arcade 3

» **System:** Evercade family » **Buy it for:** £19.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail

Blaze continues to delve into the fantastic back catalogue of Taito and it's come up with another solid cart that's filled with some great titles. The excellent *Puzzle Bobble* is easily the highlight here (particularly when played on a VS) but *Qix*, *Zoo Keeper* and *Cameltry* are great fun too.

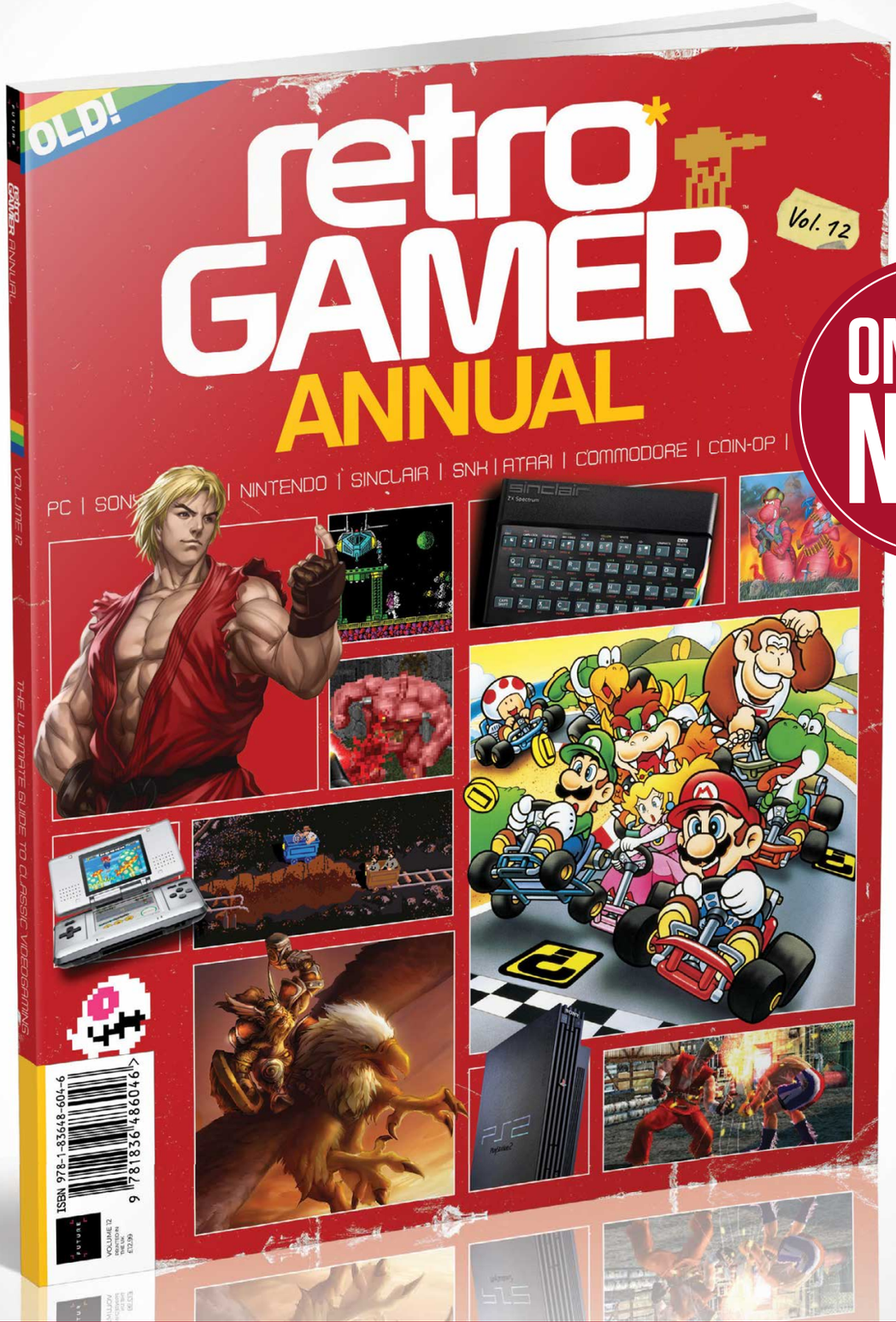
The remaining games are *Crazy Balloon*, *Football Champ*, *Lunar Rescue* and *The Fairyland Story*, which range from OK to good. The emulation is of a high quality, there's a nice poster alongside the usual manual and a good mix of variety with the featured games, but this collection is definitely not as strong as the previous two releases.

DARRAN JONES

>> **Score 78%**

CELEBRATE THE BEST OF RETRO GAMING IN 2025

Our latest tome features an incredible amount of fantastic content from Retro Gamer's past 12 months. Iconic characters, huge franchises and classic systems all feature, making it an essential read for retro fans. Don't miss it!


OLD!
retro GAMER
Vol. 12
ANNUAL
PC | SONY | NINTENDO | SINCLAIR | SNK | ATARI | COMMODORE | COIN-OP |
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CLASSIC VIDEOGAMING
ISBN 978-1-83648-604-6

ON SALE NOW

FUTURE

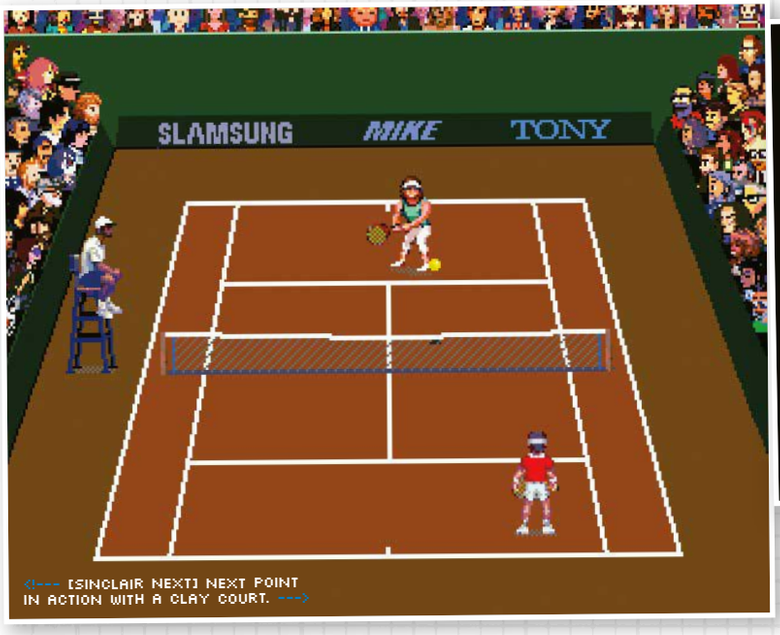
Ordering is easy. Go online at:

magazinesdirect.com

Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE/>



<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] NEXT POINT IN ACTION WITH A CLAY COURT. --->

<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] THE HORIZONTALLY SCROLLING SHOOT-'EM-UP TX-1696 FEATURES RICHARD'S MUSIC AND SCORED 88% IN **RG** 262. --->

<!--- THE SKETCH AND FINISHED COVER ART FOR NEXT POINT. --->

<INTRO> WE'VE SPENT A LOT OF TIME THIS MONTH PLAYING THE BRILLIANT ROGUECRAFT DX FROM BADGER PUNCH SOFTWARE. DIGITAL VERSIONS ARE AVAILABLE FOR AMIGA, MEGA65 BY RETRO COGS, AND A CLEVER TOP-DOWN VERSION FOR GAME BOY COLOR BY SHANE MCCAFFERTY. CHECK THEM OUT BY VISITING THALAMUSDIGITAL.ITCH.IO. PHYSICAL BOXED COPIES ARE PLANNED TO FOLLOW FROM PUBLISHER THALAMUS DIGITAL AS WELL. AND CHECK OUT OUR FEATURES FOR THE NEXT, NES, AND MEGA DRIVE, PLUS OUR USUAL REVIEWS. </INTRO>

<MAIN HEADER>

A SHEDFUL OF SOFTWARE

<INTRO> RICHARD FAULKNER OF TECHNOSHED SOFTWARE IS AN IMPORTANT PUBLISHER, MUSICIAN AND GAME CODER FOR THE SINCLAIR NEXT </INTRO>

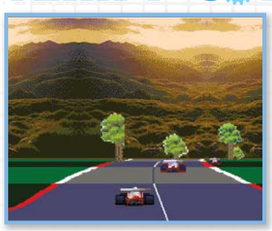
<BODY> **Richard Faulkner started as a publisher after collaborating with Patricia Curtis (get more information at technoshedsoftware.com).** "Patricia had initially tried to launch *TX-1696* directly through her Lucky Red Fish label/website," says Richard. "Unfortunately, things went awry with PayPal, so having contributed some code and all the music, it fell to me. I spent about three years of evenings and weekends on the soundtrack LP and did the SD loading code as a prototype.

Patricia has an ethos that it must be of the standard of the Bitmap Brothers or Team17; excellence in presentation and execution, and it's something we're upholding going forward."

Richard's music is a key part of each Technoshed release, and is produced in three different ways. "Vortex Tracker can produce files for one, two, or three AY chips. You can use NextDAW on the Next. This is more powerful in some ways and is great fun to use. Or I'll often make music on the Atari ST's

TERRIFIC TITLES

<INTRO> RICHARD TALKS ABOUT FIVE FORTHCOMING TECHNOSHED TITLES. </INTRO>



DRIVING GAME

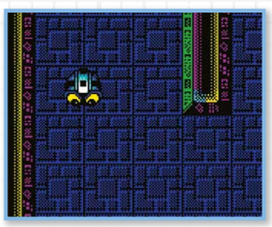
<"An unnamed pseudo-3D driving game – myself on code and music, new graphics coming from Scott Ruiz and Zingot, due early summer."/>

NECROMANCERS OF AVALON

<"By Greenman Soft, shown here with temporary graphics, with new graphics by Zingot and music by Jamie Mallender."/>

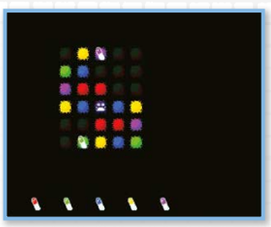
PLATYPUS PERIL

<"[This is going to be] a 2D platformer in the style of *Zool* and *Super Frog*, developed by SpecTre, with its release to be confirmed."/>



SPINBALL

<"A fast-paced, against-the-clock game where you navigate mazes – code and music by me, with Zingot pixelling, due October 2026."/>



VACCINE

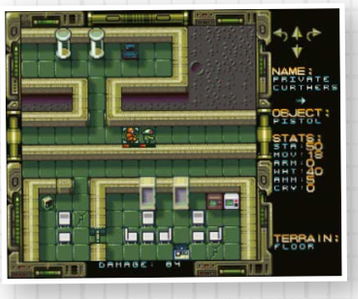
<"A very unique puzzle game where you must fight off viruses! This is also developed by SpecTre, and its release is currently to be confirmed."/>

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] GO WITH THE FLOW'S STARFISH HERO FLOATS BETWEEN SURFACES BUT ONLY STOPS MOVING WHEN THEY HIT SOMETHING SOLID. --->

<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] REI GUN NEEDS AN ACCELERATED NEXT, BUT ITS SHEER QUANTITY OF ON-SCREN BULLETS IS EXTREMLY IMPRESSIVE TO SEE. --->



<!--- [SINCLAIR NEXT] RICHARD IS FOND OF XENO BRIGADE EXTINCTION (RG 269, 85%), AND IT COULD GET AN AMIGA CONVERSION SOON. --->

<!--- RICHARD FAULKNER IS A MAN WHO IS VRY HAPPY IN HIS TECHNO SHED. --->

Cubase, running lots of synths, and mix the output down and stream it from the SD card. All three ways suit different games."

The tennis game *Next Point* from Victor Morilla will launch when KS3 machines are released, with great cover art. "The illustrator is Alfonso Azpiri's daughter," says Richard. "Her late father was the famous illustrator behind many Spanish titles." Rescape Arcade's *Go With The Flow* is another forthcoming release. "This was an original design that originated back in 2020, which never got past the earliest prototypes," explains Richard. "In early 2025, we saw some demos by Rescape Arcade and immediately thought the Copper could be used to full effect! We revised the original design with new tech, new levels and new enemies." The game's graphics are by Scott Ruiz, with music by Jamie Mallender.

Cavern Games' *Rei Gun* is a bullet-hell shooter that uses the accelerated co-processor on the Next. "One area the Next can sometimes come to the edge of its capability is when it has to do lots of calculations involving division or trigonometry," explains Richard.

The glossy Technoshed packaging has become a sign of quality. "I'm always wanting to do whatever each developer wants," Richard continues. "Some want big manuals, or postcards, or a bonus CD, or vinyl. We help with audio, graphics, playtesting and coding advice where it's helpful. I'm always interested in hearing from anybody who wants to publish a game. I genuinely just love chatting about possibilities and helping people get there."

Richard is also open to publishing on other formats. "We're publishing at least one Amiga title, although it's not quite ready for release yet, and will possibly be doing another. I'm also interested in the GBA, Dreamcast, Mega Drive and Commodore Plus/4, and the devs all have their own favourite platforms too. This is a part-time hobby after all, and it's all about what brings joy to developers and me!" </BODY>

NEWS BYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<**Atari 8-bit:** The unreleased conversion of the C64 game *Trap* has been dumped and is fully playable. Uncover it by visiting bit.ly/trap-atari />

<**C64:** Kornel Kolma released his Poker-based Rogue-like *Bal8tro*. Shuffle on over to bit.ly/bal8tro-c64 />

<**Commander X-16**: *HAZARD: Let Us Out* is a brilliant NES puzzle platformer that has been converted, with $12 giving you the download for both systems. Head to bit.ly/hazard-x16nes />

<**Dreamcast:** The DreamDisc '25 game jam organised by Orc Face Games proved very popular. You can check out at the entries available via bit.ly/dreamdisc25 />

<**Game Boy:** You can now play *Dangerous Demolition* by Dr Ludos on the Game Boy/Game Boy Color and Super Game Boy. Homebrew Factory is running a preorder campaign for physical cartridges. A digital download is $4.99, including Game Gear and Master System ROMs. Find out more at bit.ly/demolition-gb />

<**Master System:** This demo of Konami's *Castlevania* (above) is a must-play. Whip across to bit.ly/castlevania-smsdemo />

<**Plus/4:** Check out *The Pit*, converted from the classic Eighties coin-op. You'll find it by delving into bit.ly/pit_game />

<**Sinclair QL:** Jim McKay has converted *Old Tower* by RetroSouls from the ZX Spectrum. Head on over to bit.ly/oldtower-ql />

<**Sinclair Next:** *Wing Warriors* by Fran Matsusaka is a great vertically scrolling shmup for just $1. It's at bit.ly/wingwarriors-next />

<**Steam:** *Azzy Battles The Darkness* from Celtic Dragon is inspired by classic 3D platformers and is also heading to Kickstarter. Play it by visiting bit.ly/azzy-demo />

<**VIC-20**: The new website Lemon20 has been launched by the team behind Lemon64. There's more info at lemon20.com />

<**ZX Spectrum:** The comp.sys.sinclair Crap Game Competition is underway for 2026, organised by zxkerl. Make your way ovr to csscgc2026.itch.io for more info. />

CHAMPION CODER

MAURO XAVIER

<INTRO> WITH FINAL FIGHT MD NEARLY COMPLETE, MAURO'S NEXT PROJECT IS A 3D RACING GAME </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: BRAZIL WEBSITE: MXRETRODEV.ITCH.IO / PATREON.COM/CW/MAUROXAVIER
FORMAT: MEGA DRIVE WORKING ON: FINAL FIGHT MD, DRIFTIN' RAGE />

WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING MEGA DRIVE GAMES?

<I always wanted to create videogames for retro consoles and ended up choosing the Mega Drive because of the SGDK. For programming, I use the C language and Visual Studio. For graphics I use GIMP, and for sound effects I use Audacity and Goldwave. />

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CONVERT CAPCOM'S FINAL FIGHT?

<I did a demo on a platform called Colour Maximite 2; Master Linkuei encouraged me to create a Mega Drive version. I had already designed everything, thinking about three players, but I kept quiet since I didn't have much hope that the console would be able to run it. After years of optimisation, along with significant improvements to SGDK, it was possible to enable the feature. />

WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

<Edmo Caldas is the talented musician who rewrote the music, and Master Linkuei (Paulo Ferreira) initially helped me with the graphics, Sega CD, and arcade rips, colours and other adjustments. I'd like to achieve more accurate enemy behaviour compared to the arcade version. I also need to complete the high score, fix some bugs, and bring back the famous continue screen. />

WHAT INSPIRED DRIFTIN' RAGE?

<*Top Gear*, *Lotus* and *OutRunners*, but there's a bit of *RoadBlasters* and *Out Run*. When I talk about more modern titles, I think of *Burnout 3* and *Motorstorm: Apocalypse*, as I want to bring some chaos to *Driftin' Rage* in the future. />

HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT TO WRITE A 3D RACING ENGINE?

<I considered the difficulty to be moderate; however, I'm not satisfied with the curves and other details, so I believe development will become more difficult. />

WHAT ELSE ARE YOU ADDING?

<Earthquakes, hurricanes, abyss, mountains, objects flying towards the player (rocks, trees, etc), weapons, and power-ups. I'd like to release it sometime in 2026. Aside from *Final Fight MD* or any future ports, the games that are original creations should receive complete physical versions. />

<!--- MAURO IS ALSO CURRENTLY WORKING ON INTO THE DARKNESS, MAZES OF CHAOS, THE LEGEND OF DRAKONNUS, AND BULLET RHYTHM. --->

<!--- [MEGA DRIVE] MAKI FROM FINAL FIGHT 2 CLEANS OUT THE RESTAURANT WITH HER SPECIAL MOVE. --->

DATA BURST

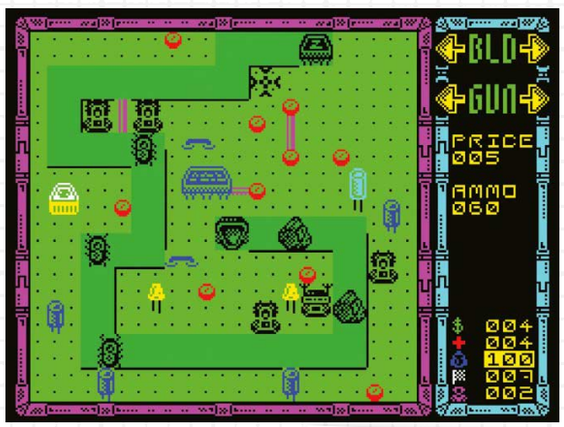
FULL SPECTRUM DEFENCE

<INFO FORMAT: ZX SPECTRUM (128K ONLY)
CREDITS: SAUSAGEWARE GAMES PRICE: DIGITAL DOWNLOAD £1.99 / PHYSICAL CASSETTE £9.99 PLUS SHIPPING
WEB: SAUSAGEWAREGAMES.ITCH.IO / BITMAPSOFT.CO.UK />

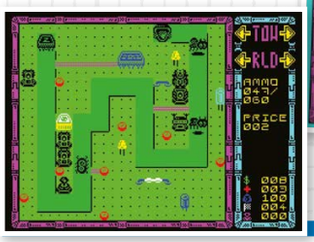
<BODY> **Tower defence games are unusual on 8-bit systems, so this game set inside a computer being attacked by viruses is a welcome one.** The player switches between three modes: Build lets you build new towers, each with a specific range and weapon (including ice to freeze enemies, Tower lets you reload a tower's ammo, upgrade a tower to make it stronger, or sell a tower to regain cash (with a limited number of towers allowed per level), while Target gives a secondary bomb attack, which can be upgraded.

All these actions cost cash, earned by destroying enemies before they reach your base (whose health depletes with each enemy attack). Enemies come in waves, and calling the next wave early from the enemy base earns a cash bonus. Survive all the waves, and your capabilities are upgraded before the next level, while later levels give a code to restart at that point. Keys can be redefined, with two needed (one to change Mode, the other to switch options). There are four difficulty settings, with Cosy being the easiest. This excellent take on the genre has varied enemies and great background levels, emphasising the setting. Good music and effects add to the atmosphere, with later levels becoming frantic. This should prove challenging for Spectrum fans. </BODY>

SCORE: 88%



<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] ON LEVEL 2, BUILDING A GUN TURRET NEAR YOUR BASE SHOULD HELP. --->



<!--- [ZX SPECTRUM] FLIES HAVE ARRIVED ON LEVEL 3, WHILE RELOADING THIS TURRET WILL COST $2. --->

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: **retrogamer@futurenet.com**

<!--- [SNES] IN ONE-PLAYER MODE, BURST THE BUBBLES AND USE YOUR SPECIAL MOVES TO AVOID CAPTURE. --->

<!--- [SNES] THE ATMOSPHERIC SELECT SCREEN, WHERE NEW CHARACTERS AND LEVELS ARE GRADUALLY UNLOCKED. --->

SUPER FANGER

<INFO FORMAT: SNES CREDITS: MEGA CAT STUDIOS / BEAKFUL BITS PRICE: £38 CARTRIDGE ONLY / £45 BOXED CARTRIDGE WITH MANUAL PLUS SHIPPING WEB: BIT.LY/SUPERFANGER />

<BODY> **Set in a haunted house, this is a twist on the classic game of Tag.** In Arcade mode, one player must avoid the enemies and burst as many bubbles as possible. There are four characters with individual special moves to choose from, with two available initially and the others unlocked, along with three new levels. A second player can help by using a ghost to distract enemies. The two-player mode happens over two rounds; whoever survives the longest before they are caught wins. The production values are high, with excellent sprites and moody, atmospheric backgrounds. It takes a few games to get into and feels a little lacking in depth, particularly for the solo player, but it is fun. Catch it if you can. </BODY>

SCORE: **74%**

<!--- [GBA] POGO CAN SHOOT SNOWBALLS TO CLEAR THESE BRICKS, OR TO FREEZE/DESTROY CERTAIN ENEMIES. --->

<!--- [GBA] COMPLETING A TOWER LEADS TO THE VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE BONUS FISHING GAME. GET SHOOTING POGO! --->

NEBULUS

<INFO FORMAT: GAME BOY ADVANCE CREDITS: THE RETRO ROOM / REBELLION PRICE: £8 DIGITAL DOWNLOAD / £18 CARTRIDGE ONLY / £36 BOXED CARTRIDGE PLUS SHIPPING WEB: BIT.LY/NEBULUS-GBA />

<BODY> **The classic John Phillips game (aka *Tower Toppler* and *Castelian*) of climbing and destroying rotating towers has been converted from the Atari ST.** You must guide Pogo upwards, using lifts and shooting snowballs. Falling or getting knocked down costs valuable time. Reach the top, and the tower self-destructs before your submarine takes you to the next tower through the bonus level, where you shoot fish with bubbles to catch them. This polished adaptation features great graphics and sound, an alternating two-player mode, plus the tougher second mission (giving 16 towers in total). </BODY>

SCORE: **85%**

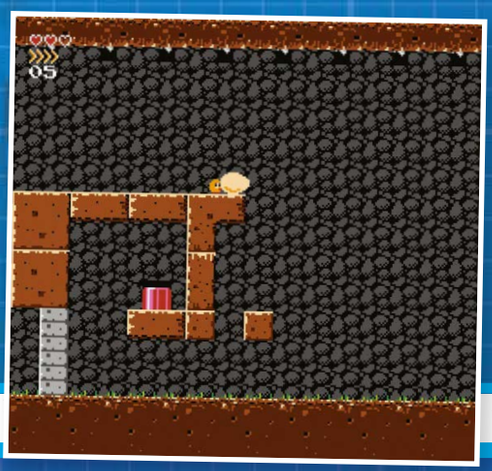
PROCESSING

<INTRO> SWEDISH DEVELOPER CHRISTIAN FAST AND HIS SON ARE WORKING ON THEIR NEW NES GAME, CHICKEN PANIC </INTRO>

<BODY> **Christian started NES development during COVID.** "With my son, we brainstormed the idea of four chickens with different abilities," he says. "The first year was trial and error. I started writing the game in Notepad ++ and NESASM, but I switched to ASM6. When I learnt new approaches and ways to implement game mechanics, we played around with those, and my son asked, 'Can't we add x and y?' so I did all I could to implement it."

The game mixes poultry, platforms and puzzles. "Our main goal is a physical release – the feeling of opening the box, browsing through the manual, and popping the cart in," explains Christian. "Another goal my son and I had was to showcase the game at a retro game expo. We achieved that at Retrospelsmässan in Gothenburg. It made me rethink mechanics and spurred me to redesign the game world. I've spent time optimising my map data; with a few more bytes, I could probably reinstate my password system." We're egging Christian on to finish it. </BODY>

<!--- [NES] UNLOCK THE SHOP WITH THE FIRST KEY, THEN YOU CAN SPEND COINS ON EXTRA ENERGY, THE DASH ABILITY, AND MORE KEYS. --->



HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

THRILLS AND CHILLS

The team look back at survival horror from the PS2 years

DARRAN JONES

TIM EMPEY

With the recent release of *Resident Evil: Requiem* and the remake of *Project Zero II*, Darran and Tim decided to revisit the PS2 era of survival horror. It was arguably one of the most interesting periods for the genre, thanks to a number of great and not so great games.

DARRAN

So Tim, why do we think survival horror games became so popular during the PS2 era?

TIM

Well *Resident Evil* kicked off the whole genre I reckon, and then everyone wanted a piece of the gory pie. Then with the PS2 etc, graphics improved and everything looked a whole lot better/worse.

DARRAN

I think that's a fair assessment of what happened. It felt like there was a lot more diversity on the PS2 as well. It is hard to imagine *Project Zero* or *Forbidden Siren* working well on the previous consoles. Do you have a standout game from the period, Tim?

TIM

I tried *Forbidden Siren* because it looked so creepy with the whole sight-jacking thing. But it played terribly, so I didn't get through a lot of that. Not long after I got my GameCube I played most of *Eternal Darkness* and, while I loved the way it messed with you, I just didn't get all the way through it. Instead I played the GameCube remake of *Resident Evil* and it was amazing. Those graphics! At that time! Amazing. Did you finish *Eternal Darkness*?

DARRAN

Man, I fricking love *Eternal Darkness*. I can still remember when it was a planned N64 game so I was made up when it turned up on the GameCube. It's clunky as hell, but so ambitious in its scope. I remember being blown away by the *Resident Evil* remake as the graphics looked astonishing. Those new zombies could do one, though! Did you enjoy the PS2 *Silent Hill* games? Did you bunk off work like I did?

TIM

Er, I've only played PS2 *Silent Hill: The Room*, and I didn't get what I was supposed to be doing in that one. The only other one I have played is the one with the ex-soldier who couldn't put his hand in a puddle to unlock a door near the start, and that annoyed me something rotten. I did go on a press trip when *Play* had the exclusive for *Alone In The Dark*, but that gave me tonsillitis.

DARRAN

Mate, *Silent Hill 2* is superb. Play the new remake when you can as it keeps the core story but solves much of the original's clunkiness. I quite like *The Room* and it's been reappraised in recent years. Are there any smaller games from this period that stood out for you?

» [PlayStation 2] *Rule Of Rose* proves expensive games aren't necessarily good ones.

TIM

I reviewed *Rule Of Rose*, it's not very good, but then all the controversy hit. I think I still have the disc, but there's nothing printed on it to indicate it is the game. So it's probably worthless, and buried in a box that I still haven't unpacked from moving over a year ago.

DARRAN

I laughed so much when hundreds of copies were found in Italy, which caused the prices in CEX and elsewhere to plummet. There were some half-decent curios during this time. *Haunting Ground* by Capcom with the dog, the *Obscure* games which were set in a high school and *Cold Fear* which was on a boat. Did you experience any of those?

» [PC] Capcom's excellent GameCube remake of *Resident Evil* is now available on all modern systems.

» [PlayStation 2] *Cold Fear* certainly has some nice ideas and being on a boat felt novel at the time, but it's no *Resident Evil 4*.

» [PC] *Silent Hill 2* is one of the greatest survival horror games of its era. The remake is also great.

TIM

Umm, no. I might have tried a bit of one of the *Clock Tower* games. Though I did play some *Fatal Frame* under some very unusual conditions…

DARRAN

I really like the *Fatal Frame* series. The first-person perspective felt novel, I like the focus on female protagonists and they have largely remained consistently creepy over the years. I did foolishly give the second game 6/10 in *games™* once, which felt overly harsh in retrospect. So Tim, I can't believe you've not mentioned the *Onimusha* games yet.

TIM

I don't think of them as horror games at all. OK, you've got monsters, but it's way more slashy slashy than survival horror in my opinion.

DARRAN

This is very controversial! I was hoping to catch you out but according to Capcom itself it uses the tags 'Action', 'Violent', and 'Hack And Slash' to describe the remakes on its Steam page. However, I still maintain they have more in common with *Resident Evil* than *Devil May Cry*.

TIM

Speaking of *Resi*. I was on *Cube* when *Resident Evil 4* came out! That was such a momentous day, the whole team going down to reception to meet Capcom's PR and thank them for saving the GameCube!

» [GameCube] Capcom reinvented the concept of survival horror with *Resident Evil 4*.

> "I reviewed Rule Of Rose, it's not very good, but then all the controversy hit"
>
> **TIM EMPEY**

DARRAN

Hah, I remember that day well. I actually picked up the GameCube and looked underneath it as I couldn't believe it was running on it. Let's face it though. If you don't think the *Onimusha* games are survival horror titles how on Earth would you categorise *Resident Evil 4*?

TIM

I'd categorise it as one of the best games ever! ✱

» [PC] *Obscure* wasn't an amazing game, but it did well enough to secure a sequel.

» [PlayStation 2] The original *Project Zero* has you frantically trying to snap away at wayward ghosts.

» [GameCube] *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* is an ambitious game with a time-spanning plot.

READERS REACT

The PS2-era games that tingled your spine

Alex W

I have a soft spot for *Extermination*. It made a stumbling attempt at almost everything *Resident Evil 4* would eventually do perfectly – weapon customisation, over-the-shoulder aiming, a then-novel contextual action button. I think I cleared it four times.

Bazza H

Forbidden Siren I enjoyed, although I was hopeless at it.

FatPlumber

The *Resident Evil* remake and *Resident Evil 0* are obvious ones. There wasn't anything quite like them previously and at the time they were peak horror. Also, a huge shoutout to *Eternal Darkness* for what's essentially, survival horror time travel – following a family line throughout history with plenty of unsettling moments.

Pixel Knight Games

Haunting Ground is amazing. Well made, scary and just a ton of fun.

Stuart Gipp

Silent Hill 2 is a fairly obvious pick, but it's also an essential one. I didn't even play it for the first time until late-2025 and I thought it was worth every single plaudit it's received and then some. You could cut the atmosphere with an enormous knife, while wearing a pyramid on your head.

Antony Longmore

Resident Evil Outbreak. I genuinely believe the game was ahead of its time. A remake of this title/series would definitely stand out amongst the rest.

ACO

Eternal Darkness. If not that, the closest I played to a PS2 survival horror was *Onimusha: Warlords*, but that was more an action game.

RJ Frazer

Resident Evil Code: Veronica on Dreamcast. I'm still bitter that Sony's politicking meant *Code Veronica* was robbed of the prestige of a numbered mainline title, even though it was the true sequel, while *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* was really only a side story of *Resident Evil 2*.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH **THE RETRO KEYHOLE**

DAZE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

"A fellow collector and friend was selling it on a social media group a while back, so I had to scoop it up."

AMOUNT PAID: £500

SONIC BLAST

"My friend messaged me a link to it on eBay. But when I got it, the box was creased a lot. But I saw a trick on YouTube on how to iron out the creases, and it now looks great."

AMOUNT PAID: £420

MEGA DRIVE II JURASSIC PARK PACK

"I got this from a guy in France who was selling up his collection. I'm good friends with said collector, so as soon as he put it up for sale, I just had to have it."

AMOUNT PAID: £1,324

A MEGA SEGA COLLECTION

Paul Angell has always loved the Mega Drive ever since he first played one

Words by Faith Johnson

BIO

NAME:
Paul Angell

LOCATION:
Hampshire

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
£35k

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
Mega Drive

FAVOURITE GAME:
The Simpsons: Hit & Run

INSTAGRAM:
@retrogamer94

For Paul Angell, it has always been the Mega Drive, and later the PS2, that fuelled his love of retro gaming. "I first discovered gaming when my mum and dad got me my first Mega Drive as a child," he begins. "I played on it every day without fail. I also enjoyed gaming with my late mum, and *Tetris* was a favourite. Then the PS2 was released, and I couldn't have been any more excited. I came home from school to find a brand-new PS2 and a couple of games sitting on the table. I asked my mum if it was for me, and it was. I remember it like it was yesterday. One of my best memories ever was opening that PS2, setting it up, and playing *WWF Smackdown! Just Bring It*."

We then ask Paul about when collecting became serious. "I started collecting about eight or nine years ago when my partner and I found out we were pregnant with our first baby. I was walking around town with my partner, buying stuff for the baby, when I went to Southampton's CEX. I saw a PS2 and purchased it with a couple of games, one being *The Simpsons: Hit & Run*. We got home, and my partner was so excited about the stuff we got for the baby, but I was excited to relive my youth again."

Paul's main collecting niche is finding different Mega Drive console bundle variants, and we ask him why he loves it so much. "The Mega Drive is my childhood console. As it stands, I'm at 21 variants, with some that are expensive and some not so much. I just can't get enough of them. The artwork is beautiful, and I just think everything about the Mega Drive is amazing. I do have a few favourites such as *Jurassic Park*, *Street Fighter* and *Toy Story*. The list goes on, but for me, it's the thrill of the next variant that comes along."

When asked about why he feels retro gaming is so popular today, Paul feels it's a hobby that expands with time and has a great community. "In my opinion, everyone wants to relive their youth," he explains. "Some people have small collections that include their childhood console and a few games that they played as a kid. Then some people get the collecting bug, as I did, and go all out. They start collecting variants, side sets and accessories. It's just such a cool hobby, and I've met some amazing friends through this collecting journey as well. I hope to make more friends along the way, and I'm not slowing down on my purchases, especially the Mega Drive."

We finish up asking Paul what his Grail items would be for his collection. "The Holy Grail item that I would love to add to my collection is the *Lion King* Master System. I've never seen one for sale, and for me, that would pretty much complete my Sega Disney set. I don't know of any other collector who has got this close to the full Disney set. I'm sure I will be the first one to have them. I won't give up trying to find it, and I can't wait to complete this set. I have been searching years for one." ✱

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com retrogamermag.bsky.social

MASTER SYSTEM II ALADDIN PACK

"I put a post on a Facebook group asking for this and the Lion King Master System. A guy replied saying he had an *Aladdin* for sale, so I made a more than fair offer and got it."

AMOUNT PAID: £1,000

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

MEGA DRIVE II JUNGLE BOOK PACK

"I purchased this from a guy who sold all his Mega Drives years back. It was one of the bigger purchases I have made."

PAID: £1,300

BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (NINTENDO 64)

Nintendo's classic adventure title can be bought loose for about **£10.** Boxed complete PAL copies are around **£45,** while mint editions can go as high as **£300.** The US version is surprisingly more expensive, particularly in mint condition.

MATCH DAY II (ZX SPECTRUM)

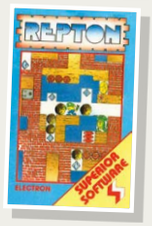
Scoring a copy of Ocean's hit sequel can be had for a transfer fee of about **£5** for a complete copy.

3D STARFIGHTER (AMSTRAD CPC)

Not many copies of this space game come up for sale, but they only cost about **£7** when they do.

WARBIRDS (ATARI LYNX)

Cart prices range from **£10-£20,** which is odd, as boxed copies start at **£20** and rarely pass **£30.**



REPTON (BBC MICRO)

This one shouldn't cost more than **£10,** although it tends to come up more as part of larger bundles.

BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND (GBA)

To get this in your hand will cost about **£70** for a loose cart and over **£100** for a complete copy.

SPIDER-MAN 2 (PLAYSTATION 2)

Complete copies can be bought for as little as **£3,** with mint or sealed copies being around **£20.**

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE (PC)

Loose discs can be found for under **£5,** with complete, good condition boxed copies rarely hitting **£10.**

PROJECT ZERO II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY (PLAYSTATION 2)

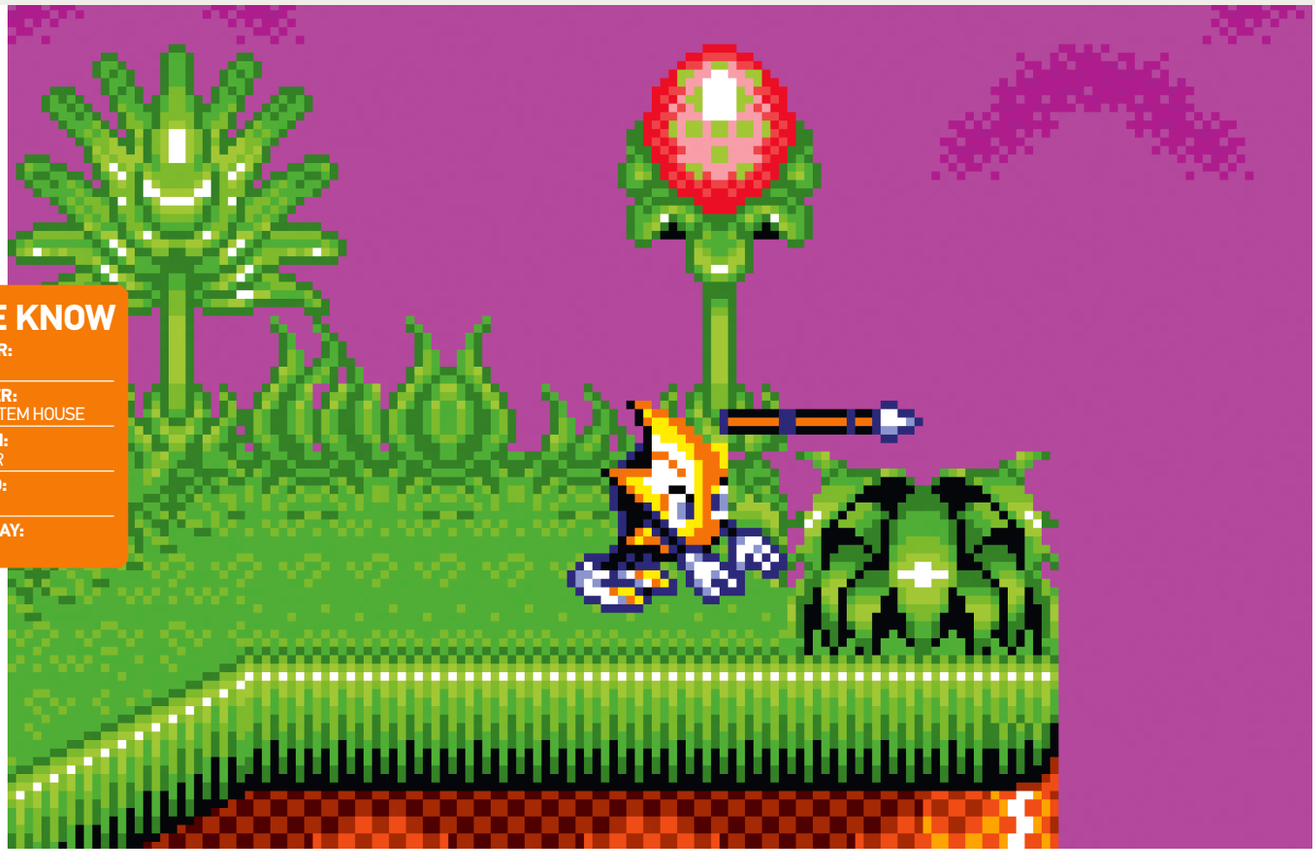
Most used copies sell between **£50-75,** with good condition, complete copies costing over **£100.** Mint usually hits over **£150,** so get saving!

HOW MUCH?!

POKÉMON HEARTGOLD

Not everyone will be collecting them all anytime soon, with this copy of *Pokémon Heart/Gold* selling for over **£1,000** in a recent auction.

Prices correct at time of print



» [Game Gear] Ristar can use enemy spears to create new platforms and find secret items

IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **» DEVELOPER:** JAPAN SYSTEM HOUSE
- **» PLATFORM:** GAME GEAR
- **» RELEASED:** 1995
- **» PRICE TODAY:** £250+

» [Game Gear] Top players will find their way to the secrets usually hidden on high platforms.

» [Game Gear] There are plenty of examples of excellent graphics in *Ristar* on Sega's Game Gear.

RISTAR

While he is best known for his outing on Sega's Mega Drive, Ristar also made a rather explosive appearance on the Game Gear in what would become one of the last games released for Sega's handheld

Words by Faith Johnson

THE GAME

Ristar is a side-scrolling platform game that contains many of the usual gameplay mechanics found in the genre at the time. All the levels have a set theme, such as a forest or a pirate ship, and involve reaching the end without losing all your life points. Each set of levels ends in a boss fight before Ristar shoots off to another planet in his quest to save his people.

The gameplay hook that separates *Ristar* from other platformers of the time is *Ristar*'s grabbing mechanic. This is used to grab enemies and headbutt them, to grip onto ladders and platforms, to swing around poles, activate switches and open treasure boxes. It's quite difficult to get the hang of it at first, but once you practice aiming Ristar's arms at the intended target, everything falls into place, and this suddenly becomes a genuinely different kind of platformer.

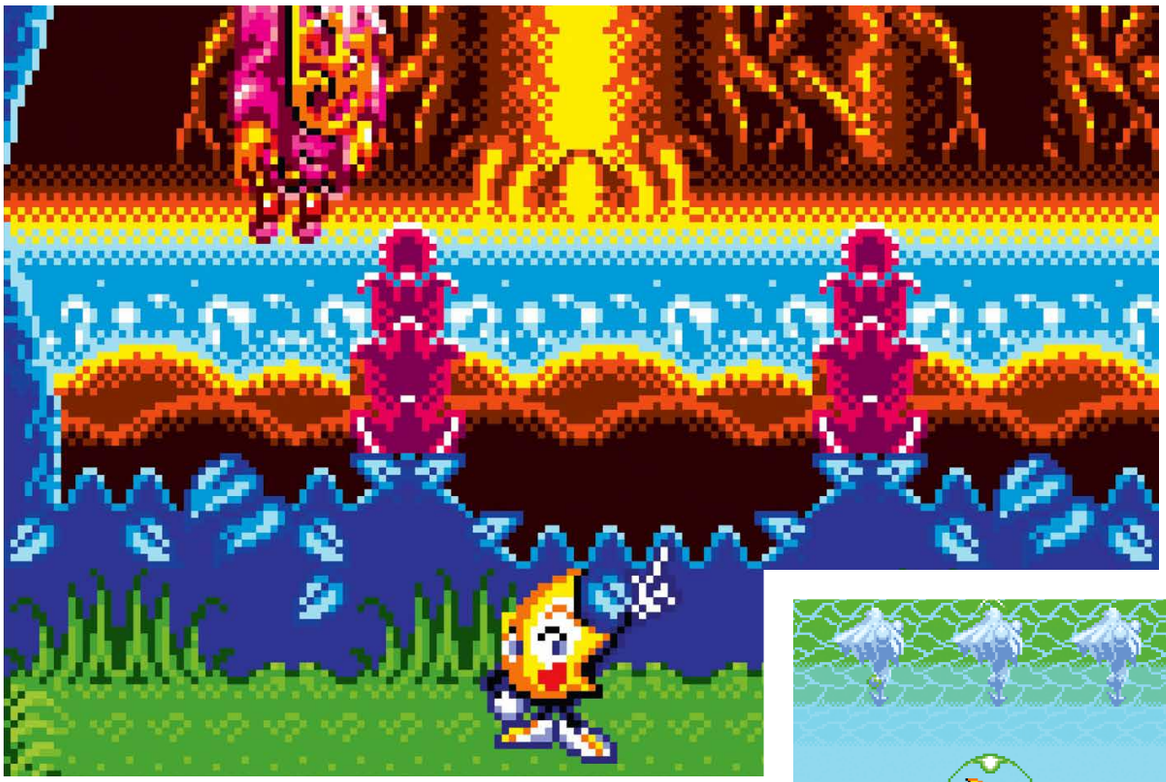
There are several other mechanics to experiment with in *Ristar*, such as using items dropped by enemies to find secrets or use as projectiles. Some enemies drop hats that can be thrown like a Frisbee, and others drop spears that can be used as platforms once lodged against a wall.

Another aspect that sets it apart from other handheld platformers is the level of detail in the sprites and the impressive use of colour. It's one of the best-looking games on the Game Gear and is also large for a handheld game, with almost as many levels as the Mega Drive version.

THE QUALITY

The critics praised *Ristar*, and although comparisons to the Mega Drive version were made, most felt it stood alone as a decent platformer. Mike Weigand of *Electronic Gaming Monthly* reviewed it in March 1995, scoring it 7.5/10. "I can't help but be taken in by the cute little star and its bouncing action," he explained. Weigand was also impressed with the presentation, saying "the colours and sounds are good for a portable".

Game Informer, which scored *Ristar* 8/10, concluded that, "Sega did a great job in this translation to the Game Gear. The play is almost as good as its big-screen counterpart. *Ristar* is the next best thing to *Sonic* and a welcome change of pace."



» [Game Gear] Every set of levels ends in a boss fight, and Ristar celebrating his victory over them.

Mean Machine Sega scored *Ristar* 82%, and reviewer Paul Bofton enjoyed the size of the game. "Unlike most of its rivals, there are plenty of levels," Bofton said. He also felt it may reinvigorate the Game Gear by saying, "The graphics will certainly give haggard-looking handhelds a bit of a facelift."

WHY IT'S EXPENSIVE

By the time *Ristar* was released on the Game Gear, Sega had all but given up on trying to take a slice of Nintendo's dominance of the handheld market. The Game Boy was selling in the millions, and Sega just couldn't compete. There just weren't enough Game Gear owners around, especially by 1995, to give *Ristar* a platform for success that would have inevitably led to more prints of the game.

Beyond the original release, this version has only ever been included in the USA-exclusive Sonic's PlayPal Plug & Play device. This was a cheap controller and console in one that plugs straight into a television, but is now hard to find. Add to this the fact that Ristar is an anthropomorphic character, which are always popular among collectors, and it means that when good condition complete copies do come up, they generally sell quite quickly.

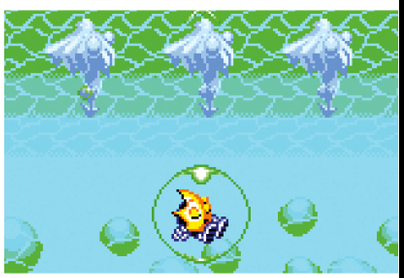
CHEAPER ALTERNATIVES

The cheapest way to enjoy *Ristar* on the Game Gear is to buy a cart-only copy, as these can be picked up for £30 if you shop around and have some patience.

While there are usually a few loose carts for sale, complete copies in good condition are quite scarce, so this may be the best option for many, regardless of their preferences.

An alternative Game Gear title to try that isn't as expensive is *Dynamite Headdy*. This shares some gameplay mechanics with *Ristar*, especially with the way both characters hang onto platforms and can use different items to gain access to secret platforms.

The next best alternative is to play the Mega Drive version, which is readily available on several Sega collections, most notably on *Sonic Mega Collection* for the PlayStation 2, GameCube, Xbox, and PC.



» [Game Gear] Ristar is happy sleeping in his underwater home before his adventure begins.

» [Game Gear] You'll need to use the Shooting Star move if you want to build huge scores

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ristar on the Game Gear is a fun platformer that uses every ounce of the handheld's abilities. It may not be as vibrant or polished as its big brother on the Mega Drive, but it still holds up well today and is one of the better platformers on the system. This is one that collectors may find hard to source in decent condition, complete nowadays, but the box art, especially for the Japanese version, is some of the best the Game Gear has to offer. ✱

I'VE GOT IT!

These collectors have reached out and grabbed Ristar

Vance the Happenstance
I have it loose. It came with my used Game Gear I picked up back around 1998-2000? I can't remember the exact year anymore but I do remember that I got the system, a case, the Game Gear magnifier, the AC Adapter, *Ristar* and *Taz Escape From Mars* for around $50. I got it from a thrift store, which my mom called the junk store. It shut down nearly 20 years ago at this point but I'll always remember this find.

blast68k
I bought a complete copy from a used games store, but it wasn't terribly expensive. I cannot remember the exact price I paid for it, but it was not more than 25 Euros.

Justin Harris
I bought a copy of it at Game Dude in North Hollywood, CA a few years back. I can't recall exactly how much it was, maybe $20. I bought a heap of Game Gear games before they raised their prices. I checked their price guide that was updated in September 2024, and it's currently listed for $39.

Callum Hawkes
It's one of the Game Gear games that I'm still on the look out for. I do have the very rare boxed *Tarzan Lord Of The Jungle*, though.

Blanks
I never had it for Game Gear. I played it recently on the Nintendo Switch Online service. The crazy little guy runs around strangling everyone like a maniac.

Jed
I got my Game Gear copy of *Ristar* about five years back on eBay. I only paid about $45 for it. It's a cart, though. I'm assuming it goes for a lot more if it's complete.

FEELING THE URGE

The Analogue^{3D} has reignited Darran's love for the N64

Back in lockdown I decided to invest in the Nintendo 64, after selling my original system just before the birth of my first daughter Emily. As I often do, I soon acquired most of the games I'd owned the first time around, as well as titles like *Perfect Dark*, *Excitebike 64* and *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, which all came out after I sold my console.

Despite owning my collection for around six years now, I've still only completed a small fraction of my games. This will seem ludicrous to some, but if I'm honest, I've always been more excited about the thrill of the hunt and getting a game for a good price rather than the actual playing of said game. I also now realise that my ASD (I was recently diagnosed in August 2025) is a contributing factor to how obsessive I become when trying to acquire certain things and it also helps explain why I so easily move off them to pursue new 'passions'.

I'd been following the announcement of the Analogue^{3D} closely and while its lengthy production schedule and launch weren't without controversy, I've been really impressed with the final system, particularly the way it can boost the performance of certain games. I'm not quite ready to retire the NTSC-modded console I bought back in 2020, but since the Analogue^{3D} has turned up, all of my N64 gaming has been done in my front room on my 65-inch LG OLED.

Initially I played many of my games on their original settings as I wanted the experience of playing on the device to be as accurate and authentic as possible, but I soon realised that I was kidding myself. Games like *Castlevania: Legacy Of Darkness*, *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Perfect Dark* are transformed using the system's overclock settings and as a result they're far more enjoyable to play. I realise this is a little hypocritical to say this after recently dunking on those revisionist gamers who were proclaiming *Sonic Unleashed* to be a great game because of how new consoles were drastically improving its performance, but I feel this is different.

I'm under no illusions that the original games had flaws and performance issues on release but unlike *Sonic Unleashed*, even with those issues the likes of *Perfect Dark* and *Banjo-Kazooie* were still considered brilliant games. *Castlevania* not so much, but even before I got my hands on an Analogue^{3D} I had come to the conclusion that the N64 *Castlevania*s are actually a lot better than I originally gave them credit for back in the day.

So what have I been playing on the Analogue^{3D} in the last few months? Well, a little bit of everything if I'm honest. Initially I had the honeymoon period of just trying out all my games to see how much better they ran when the machine was fully tricked out. *Sin & Punishment*, *Banjo-Tooie*, *Gauntlet Legends* and *Ocarina Of Time* all quickly grabbed my attention and I was even able to convince Melanie to play a bit of *Gauntlet Legends* with me (it's one of the few games we completed together before the kids came along). Inevitably though, I stopped looking at the games I still hadn't completed and began eyeballing new titles that could be added to my collection. I've already mentioned how I picked up *Rocket: Robot On Wheels* for a small fortune and how close I am to finishing it and I've also added *Dr Mario 64* to the collection as well. I recently snagged a US copy of *Bomberman 64* for well under what it usually goes for and that's going to be my next time sink, but I've also got a Japanese version of *Pokémon Stadium 2* on the way. I'm unsure how much Japanese knowledge it will require, but as it's ten times cheaper than the US equivalent it felt like a solid gamble at just over £20.

Despite the fact that I have eBay searches in place for 'NTSC *Tetrisphere*' and 'NTSC *Bomberman Hero*' I'm going to try and focus on playing and completing my new acquisitions rather than get new ones.

Will I manage that? Probably not, but at least they'll run fantastically well when I do get around to playing them. ✱

> "I've been really impressed with the final system"
> **DARRAN JONES**

TRANSFORMED GAMES

THE OVERCLOCKED TITLES THAT HAVE IMPRESSED ME

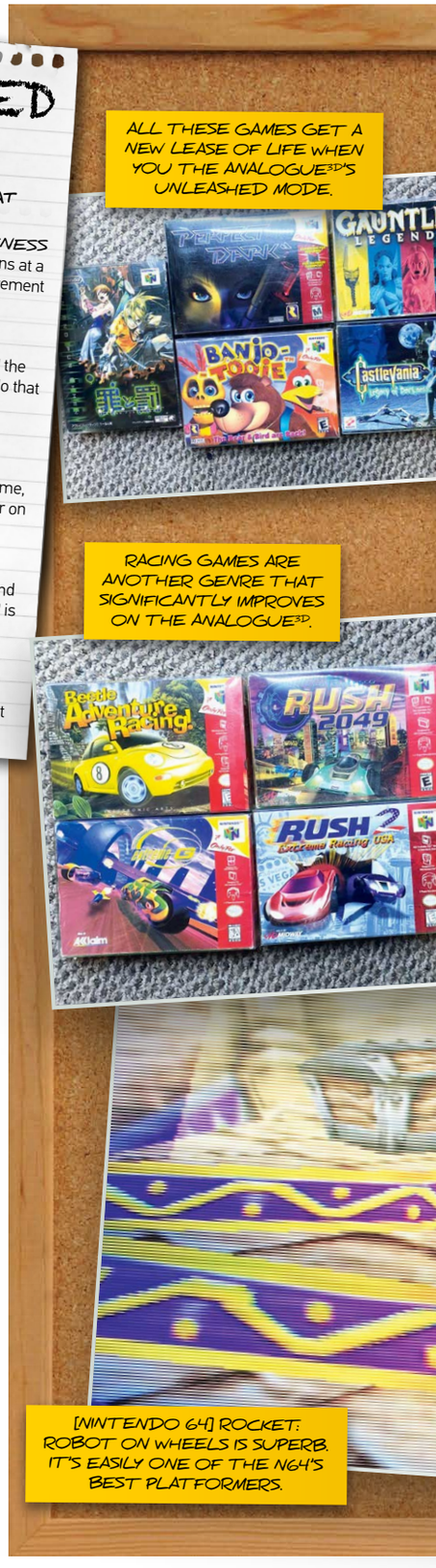
CASTLEVANIA: LEGACY OF DARKNESS
This is so much nicer to play than before. It runs at a far higher framerate and the camera and movement feel a lot more responsive as a result.

PERFECT DARK
It's shocking I know, but I've never completed the original *Perfect Dark* on the N64. I now plan to do that via the Analogue^{3D}.

SIN & PUNISHMENT: SUCCESSOR TO THE EARTH
This was always an impressive-looking N64 game, but now it's just a little smoother and much nicer on the eyes with some tweaked settings.

GAUNTLET LEGENDS
I've always had a soft spot for this arcade port and it holds up particularly well when the Analogue^{3D} is fully tricked out.

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE
Yes I could just play the Dreamcast version but I bought this via eBay from a member of Rare, so it holds special value to me.


ALL THESE GAMES GET A NEW LEASE OF LIFE WHEN YOU THE ANALOGUE^{3D}'S UNLEASHED MODE.
RACING GAMES ARE ANOTHER GENRE THAT SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES ON THE ANALOGUE^{3D}.
[NINTENDO 64] ROCKET: ROBOT ON WHEELS IS SUPERB. IT'S EASILY ONE OF THE N64'S BEST PLATFORMERS.

[NINTENDO 64] IGNORE THE MESS AROUND THE TV, PERFECT DARK RUNS SO MUCH BETTER NOW.
[NINTENDO 64] I ACTUALLY LIKE THE FILTERS ANALOGUE HAS ADDED TO THE ANALOGUE 3D, IT MAKES GAMES LIKE GAUNTLET LEGENDS LOOK LOVELY AND CRISP.
RUSH
BODY HARVEST
GOEMON'S GREAT ADVENTURE
MISCHIEF MAKERS
TOPGEAR RALLY
PAPER MARIO
QUAKE
STAR WARS
ALL OF THE ABOVE ARE ON THIS YEAR'S LIST TO COMPLETE. WILL I ACTUALLY MANAGE IT THOUGH?
Quest 64
NINTENDO64
THQ
I'VE HEARD LOTS OF MIXED STUFF ABOUT QUEST 64 BUT A RECENT PLAYTHROUGH BY ONE OF MY BLUESKY FRIENDS CONVINCED ME TO GIVE IT A TRY.

READERS REACT

The modern devices that fuel your retro passion

nromdotcom
I gotta hand it to Evercade. Not just for reigniting my love of retro gaming, but of games in general. When I got the OG handheld in 2022 I had mostly fallen off videogames as a hobby, but now I'm back into games both as a hobby and a community.

Ciaran
For me? First a RetroTink-5X Pro, and now a RetroTink-4K. The ability to play my old dusty consoles on a modern screen has been a game-changer.

Simon Lock
Not sure if it is relevant, but I credit the AtGames portable *Streets Of Rage* Mega Drive handheld as being so abysmally bad, it drove me to learn to repair my childhood Mega Drive. It snowballed from there.

William
I love my Analogue Pocket, it's really got me back into playing GBA games on cartridge. I've recently been hoovering up lots of cheap titles off eBay, as I prefer focussing on one cartridge instead of being overwhelmed with an endless list of ROMs.

FrankTheTank
The SNES Classic Mini rocked my world recently. I got to play some titles that I never did years ago. I think it's become my favourite system now and has overtaken the N64...

Daniel James Diggle
The Analogue Pocket is great. I ended up starting a fairly large GBA, Game Boy and Game Boy Color collection! But also seconding the RetroTink! After picking up a 4K model I then grabbed a Saturn, PSX and PS2 and have been loving playing them on the big screen. It was an awesome purchase!

Filbert Wang
The Evercade. Just for being able to slap a cart into the machine and immediately jump into a game when you are tired after work. I love that the games are curated selections too so there are generally few stinkers!

Antonio
Thanks to the RetroTink I finally invested in an RGB cable for my Mega Drive.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – **TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a copy of one of our classic retro books from our archives. Good luck everyone!

» [PC] Some readers thought 'mayor' referred to it being a nightmare to beat, but we've just always liked the word to describe a big baddie.

FEELING BOSS

Dear **Retro Gamer** team,
I've noticed that you use the terms 'mayor' and 'boss' seemingly interchangeably to refer to special, usually end-of-level, videogame enemies, but I've almost never seen 'mayor' being used in this way anywhere else. Everyone else seems to only use 'boss'! What's the history behind using 'mayor' in this context? Does it come from a particular region or games genre? And do you make any distinction between a 'boss' and a 'mayor'? Thanks!
Henry 'The Etymology Mayor' Petrie

Thanks for writing in, Henry. Darran saw the term used in some old Japanese-focussed game mags, as well as some *D&D* magazines and just always liked the term. We make no real distinction between the two terms. We hope that clears things up for you.

A TRIBUTE TO NICK

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I wanted to write to offer my condolences for the passing of Nick Thorpe. I'm only now reading the news (I held off on the *Shadow Of The Colossus* issue until my birthday, today, since it's one of my favourite games – a nerdy detail I hope you'll take as an indication of how highly many of us value your magazine rather than how weird I am to skip an issue and return later).

I've enjoyed reading **Retro Gamer** for several years now and have always appreciated Nick's articles. I will miss him in every issue from now – indeed I already noticed his absence given I've read out of order. Partly I wanted to share that, but it also made me realise how much I value the magazine and wanted to share that with Darran and the rest of the team.

» Nick would have been overwhelmed with the sheer amount of messages his work has received. We wish he was still here to see them all.

I can only imagine how hard it must be to carry on with another issue while feeling the loss of Nick. So, I wanted you all to know that I value the magazine greatly and truly appreciate the work you're doing. I know no one else who shares my passion for retro gaming (and gaming in general, to be honest, I've never met anyone that I can share a word about *Metal Gear Solid* with since my school days). Today I feel a little more lonely knowing of Nick's passing.

But I love the magazine for connecting me with like-minded, good people who share a similar passion. Please do keep up the good work. And pass on to Nick's family how much his readers will miss him.
Daniel McFarlane

Thanks so much for the kind words about Nick, we really appreciate it, Daniel. We hope you had a great birthday and we'll make sure Nick's family sees your lovely tribute.

AGHAST ABOUT DUNE

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I absolutely love the magazine, I've

STAR LETTER

SHOPPING AROUND

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
While rereading an old *Mean Machines Sega*, I was amazed by how many adverts there were for independent gaming shops: DWM in Dundee, Pro Soft in Bournemouth, Power Plus in Southend… a whole ecosystem that's all but vanished.

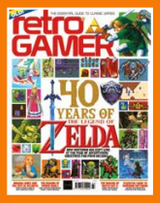
It took me back to the mid-Nineties, when I discovered a tiny games shop hidden on Chapel View in South Croydon. I've never found any record of it since – maybe another reader remembers it? For a 12-year-old kid, finding a secret games shop felt magical.

These days, indie stores are so rare you can practically count them on one hand. I'd love to see an article looking back at that era and whether any of those shops survived.
All the best,
Phil

PS. An advert for Megabytes in Sutton jogged my memory – and amazingly, it's still going!

You're right Phil, most specialist games shops seem to be incredibly rare nowadays. You've also just reminded us that we were going to look at a feature covering the independent shops that are still going strong today, so thanks for jogging our memory and have a book for making us all nostalgic.

» Megabytes still exists today. We like the look of that nearby toyshop as well.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer,
Future Publishing, Quay House,
The Ambury, Bath,
Somerset, BA1 1UA

Email: retrogamer@futurenet.com

» [Amiga] Darren Singleton is a big fan of *Dune*'s soundtrack on the Amiga.

been a subscriber for over ten years now! I am a little aghast though. You recently did an entire six-page article about Amiga game music and didn't mention *Dune*! The soundtrack to this classic game by Stéphane Picq and Philippe Ulrich is, without a doubt in my mind, the finest music in the history of this beloved computer.

The game is amazing too and I'd love a feature about it. I know you've covered it before but we have a new *Dune* movie coming up so there's always room for a revisit!
Darren Singleton

Thanks for writing in, Darren. We obviously couldn't cover every Amiga game with an amazing soundtrack, so thanks for giving a mention to *Dune*. It's great to know it still resonates with you after all this time.

PODCAST MENTIONS

Hi **Retro Gamer**,
I've been a subscriber for a couple of years now. I absolutely love the mag and look forward to it every month. I just heard Darran on the Retro Asylum podcast from November (late listener sorry!) and

» Darran recently appeared on the Retro Asylum podcast. There's a video link to the episode at bit.ly/asylum_darran

I have to say I was fascinated by the interview and would love to hear more from Darran.

I guess this is where I shamelessly plug my favourite gaming podcast Gaming Views by Dan & Dan. (Iain Lee also mentioned them and brought the pod to my attention in a superb article a few issues back.) They started their podcast in May last year and they are absolutely fantastic. I would love to connect two worlds together – my favourite mag and my favourite pod! I was wondering if Darran would give an interview to Gaming Views if he has the time, I'm sure they would love to have him on.
Thank you for everything,
Antony Longmore

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Discussed This Month

He's already sold off his GBA and SNES collection, but Darran has more things to get rid of, so he's currently listing items from his personal collection to sell at the Bournemouth Gaming Market. The event will have finished by the time you read this, so look out for a read up on how he did in next month's My Retro Life.

We're glad you enjoyed listening about Darran's gaming background and subsequent career in magazines. He doesn't do many podcasts, but maybe he could be convinced if the right subject matter comes along.

Your say

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite moment from The Legend Of Zelda series?

» [Switch 2] *Breath Of The Wild* is filled with memorable moments, so it's not surprising to see it getting so many mentions.

FPL Gills
Playing *Link's Awakening* on the Game Boy at eight years old, finding the sword on the beach at the start of the game, and the music kicking in. Even now it gives me goose bumps.

karolinakom
In *Breath Of The Wild*, reaching Kakariko Village after experiencing the Blood Moon for the first time was sooo soothing. I wish I could experience it again.

Wambam Wammy
A Link To The Past, entering the forest for the first time looked amazing with all that transparent mist everywhere. Exploring it and not being able to find the Master Sword. Then getting the three pendants thinking you are near the end game, only to land in the Dark World.

Harmony
Seeing my first dragon, Farosh, flying in the distance above Hyrule Bridge absolutely stunned me. It really helped to show how vast the world in *BOTW* actually is.

Gavin Anderegg
When I first arrived at Hyrule Field in *Ocarina Of Time*. Compared to previous games I'd played, the space felt impossibly large and full of possibility. I just had to explore every corner. Getting that game for Christmas is still a very special memory for me.

Aaron Weiss
Tetra being revealed as Princess Zelda in *Wind Waker*. From a design perspective it wasn't shocking but from a story perspective it was an excellent reveal.

DJE80
The beginning of *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, entering Hyrule Castle, hearing the rain drops on the roof. Magic.

Gavvie
The look Link gives his ocarina when he learns a new song in *Ocarina Of Time*. It's very much a "what the hell?" face and it makes me laugh every time I see it.

RJ Frazer
The quest to acquire Biggoron's Sword in *Ocarina Of Time*. Racing against the clock to opposite ends of the map was both a thrilling challenge and an enchanting way to explore the hidden corners of an expansive world. An early moment where 11-year-old me locked in with a game!

Jamie Robinson
Emerging from the Shrine Of Resurrection at the start of *Breath Of The Wild* and seeing the vastness of Hyrule. It's a jaw-dropping moment.

retro GAMER

Future Publishing Ltd Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, Somerset, BA1 1UA | **Email:** retrogamer@futurenet.com

EDITORIAL

Editor | **Darran 'Breath Of The Wild' Jones**
darran.jones@futurenet.com
Art Editor | **Andy 'Never played a Zelda' Salter**
Production Editor | **Tim 'The Wind Waker' Empey**
Group Art Director | **Woz 'Ocarina Of Time' Brown**
Editorial Director | **Tony 'A Link To The Past' Mott**

CONTRIBUTORS

Writing Asha Bardon, Adam Barnes, Martyn Carroll, Sean Cole, David Crookes, Andrew Fisher, Faith Johnson, Paul Kautz, James Konik, Iain Lee, Graeme Mason, Mike Mika, Rory Milne, Paul Rose,

Design | Ryan Robbins

PRODUCTION

Head of Production | **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager | **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager | **Joanne Crosby**
Advertising Production Coordinator | **Emma Thomas**
Digital Editions Controller | **Jason Hudson**
Production Controller | **Vivienne Calvert**

ADVERTISING

Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director | **Clare Dove**
clare.dove@futurenet.com
Account Director | **Kevin Stoddart**
kevin.stoddart@futurenet.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Email enquiries | **help@magazinesdirect.com**
Subscription enquiries | **www.mymagazine.co.uk/FAQ**
Online orders | **magazinesdirect.com**
Consumer Revenues Director | **Sharon Todd**

Subscription delays: Disruption issues are currently affecting UK and international delivery networks. Please allow up to seven days before contacting us about a late delivery via help@magazinesdirect.com

CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager | **Brooke Butler**

INTERNATIONAL

Retro Gamer is available for licensing and syndication. To find out more contact us at **licensing@futurenet.com** or view our available content at **www.futurecontenthub.com**.
Head of Print Licensing | **Rachel Shaw**

MANAGEMENT

Managing Director, Games and Ents | **Matthew Pierce**
Global Art Director | **Rodney Dive**
SVP Consumer | **Kevin Addley**

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

RetroGamerUK | retrogamermag.bsky.social | Retro Gamer Magazine | @RetroGamerMag | @RetroGamer_Mag

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Email enquiries **help@magazinesdirect.com** | **magazinesdirect.com**
PRINTED BY William Gibbons & Sons Ltd, 26 Planetary Road, Willenhall, WV13 3XT
DISTRIBUTED BY Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU | For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com | www.marketforce.co.uk
ISSN: 1742-3155

All contents © 2026 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Kevin Li Ying**
Non-Executive Chairman **Mark Brooker**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

ipso. Regulated

Widely Recycled

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards. The manufacturing paper mill holds full FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification and accreditation

GPSR EU RP (for authorities only)
eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317
Tallinn, Estonia
hello@eucompliancepartner.com
+3375690241

General Product Safety 2023/988: The use of our product under normal or reasonably foreseeable conditions of use, including the actual duration of use, does not present any risk or only the minimum risks compatible with the product's use, which are considered acceptable and consistent with a high level of protection of the health and safety of consumers.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

Retro Gamer (ISSN 1742-3155, USPS XXXXX) is published monthly with an extra copy in April by Future plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA.

Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., c/o BBT 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to Future plc, c/o World Container Inc., c/o BBT

150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA.

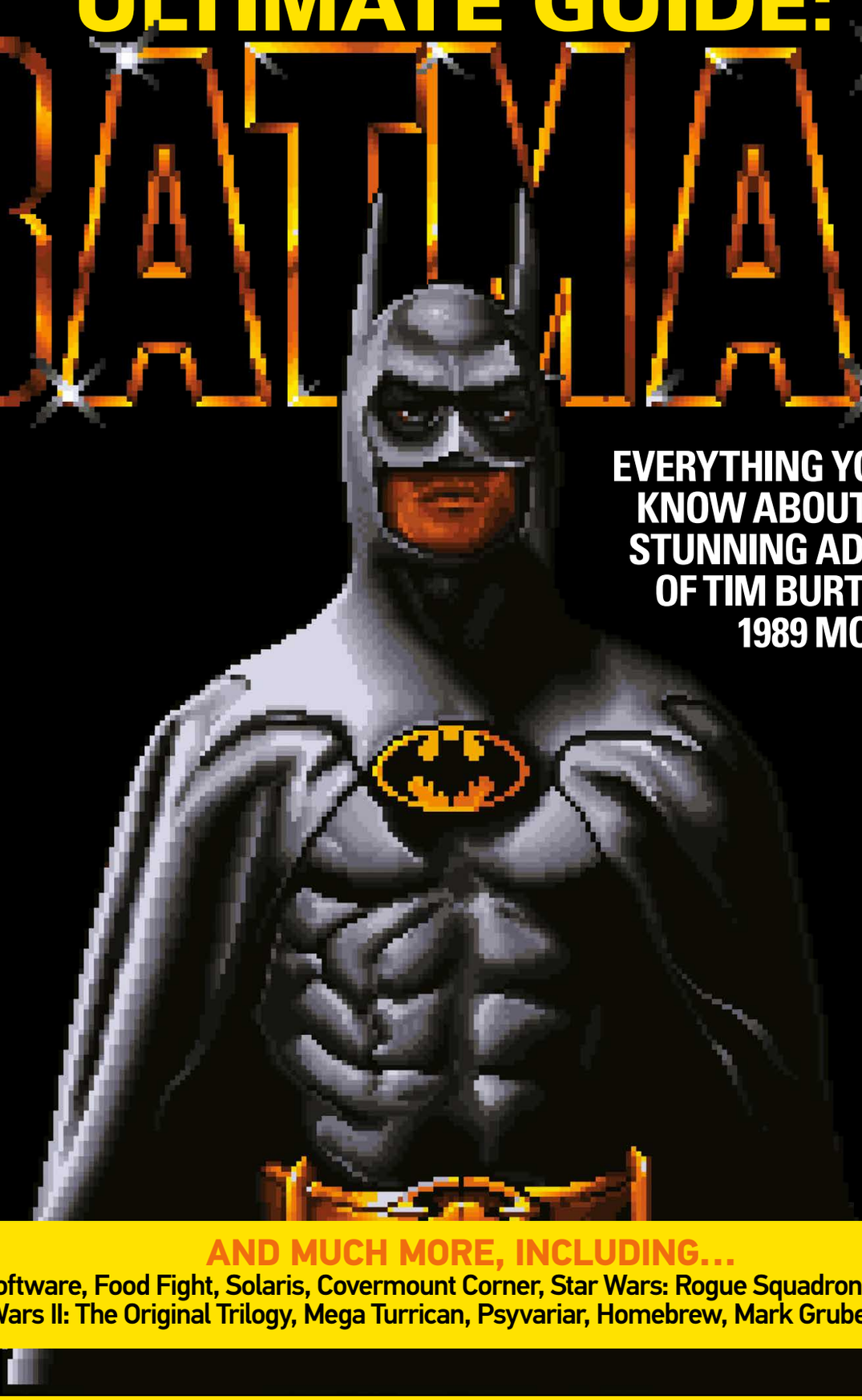
>>LOAD 285

nextmonth

ON SALE 7TH MAY 2026

ULTIMATE GUIDE:

BATMAN



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OCEAN'S STUNNING ADAPTATION OF TIM BURTON'S HIT 1989 MOVIE

AND MUCH MORE, INCLUDING...

Skyfox, id Software, Food Fight, Solaris, Covermount Corner, Star Wars: Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader, Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy, Mega Turrican, Psyvariar, Homebrew, Mark Gruber, Gaming Grails

Bayonetta

FLY ME TO THE MOON

» XBOX 360 » 2009
» PLATINUMGAMES

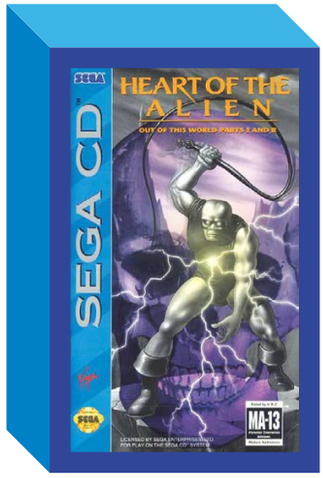
I left the world of videogames in September 2009 to do a master's degree in multimedia journalism. It was a bit of an ass-backwards way of doing things, and not having a bachelor's degree in anything made it all the more daunting. I was also faced with real-world issues like potholes, the decision to knock down the Imax cinema in Bournemouth, court reporting… all sorts of things that I realised I just wasn't that interested in. To escape from all that I had my Xbox 360 and halfway through-ish the master's *Bayonetta* was released.

I'd read the previews and reviews, and somehow managed to buy a copy (leftover Christmas money maybe). I fired it up and was instantly taken by the smoothness and massive variety of the combat. Sure you can mash a bit and get through the game, but it was much more fun to master it. And I kind of did. Controlling combos, dodging at just the right moment to activate Witch Time, using Dodge Offsets and bludgeoning bosses (learning their attacks after a good number of attempts).

Eventually I completed *Bayonetta*, or had I? You get ranked at the end of each level and are awarded a grade, and mine were mostly rated Stone, the worst you can get. So the real work began to get Pure Platinum awards for every level. I'm not sure how I had the time to do all this, but I did it. Pure Platinum all the way (those *Space Harrier* and motorbike levels were incredibly tricky). Even better was that this was the first game I got all the Achievements for!

I've played it again a year or two ago and… I've got no skills anymore! Back to Stone awards again. I did pass the master's degree though, so that's good. I think my mum has the certificate framed, and it's hanging in the downstairs loo. ✱

ENDGAME



HEART OF THE ALIEN
(MEGA-CD, 1994)

» With Another World's sequel remaining a Mega-CD-exclusive to this day, many will no doubt wonder what happened to Lester the scientist and his alien companion Buddy. Worry no longer, but be warned, it doesn't have a happy ending...

01

» Buddy and Lester return to the prison they escaped from so Buddy can free his mates from their red-eyed enslaver. A few cracks from his Power Whip forces his opponent into a pit which contains a very familiar caged foe.

02

» The cad begs for his life, but Buddy isn't having any of it. He releases the beast and watches in satisfaction as it tears apart his red-eyed tormentor. As his nemesis is dragged off screaming for his life, Buddy rescues his friends.

03

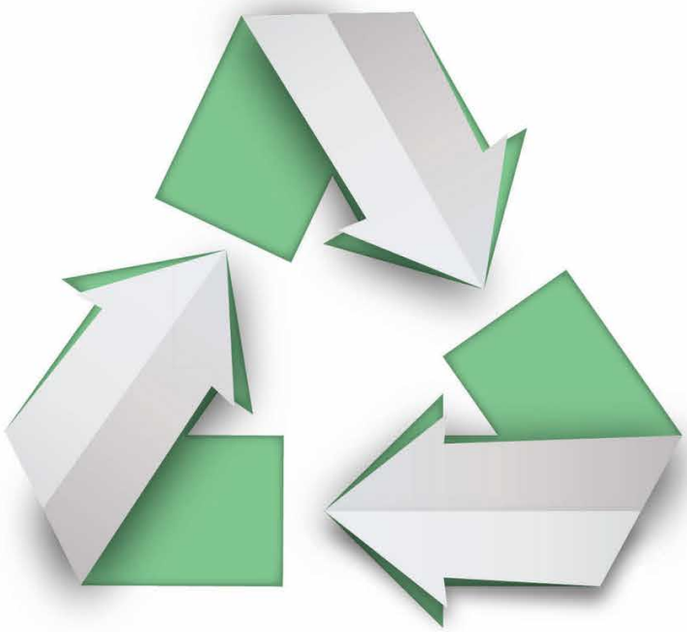
» Buddy starts freeing the other slaves who rejoice and immediately start torching the prison. Not the smartest idea while they're all still inside, but these are trying times which call for drastic measures.

04

» Buddy finds Lester who was electrocuted after saving Buddy earlier, and he carefully transports him from the prison while rioting continues around him. Will the intrepid scientist live to see another day? Or will something happen that is so bleak and miserable that it'll ruin everyone's day?

05

» Having no medical knowledge whatsoever, Buddy simply assumes that Lester passed away from his wounds (in reality he was knocked unconscious after the nasty shock). With tears in his eyes and not noticing his friend's weak stirrings, Buddy incinerates his mate alive. Poor Lester.



PAPER REVOLUTION

74% of paper and 83% of paper-based packaging is recycled into new products; one of the highest recycling rates of any material in Europe!

Sources: Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI), 2020 and Eurostat, 2018.
Europe: EU27 + Norway, Switzerland and the UK.

Discover the story of paper
www.lovepaper.org
Scan for paper facts, activities, blogs and much more!

LOVE PAPER®

Advertisement